A Rhetoric of Religious Order: The Case of the Promise Keepers.

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A RHETORIC OF RELIGIOUS ORDER:
THE CASE OF THE PROMISE KEEPERS

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
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in

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by

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ABSTRACT

This study employs a Burkeian critical perspective to explain the growth and impact of the evangelical movement-organization known as Promise Keepers. Specific attention is given to the strategies of identification by which Promise Keepers manages the exigencies of identity, recruitment, and opposition. In addition, this study introduces the concept of the scriptural implant, a strategy of identification by which Promise Keepers attempts to secure the truth and authority of its discourse.

Data for this study were selected from a range of sources, including published literature, audio and video tapes, and Internet materials produced by Promise Keepers. Interviews with Promise Keepers' leaders, who occupy national and regional positions of authority, provide additional insight into the rhetorical nature and function of this evangelical movement-organization.

This study found that Promise Keepers managed the first exigence by constructing an alternative religious identity which grants followers the power and authority do things other identities, including religious ones, can't or won't do. To manage the second exigence, Promise Keepers' relied on the prior public persona of Bill McCartney, as well the production of a professionalized system of recruiters and recruitment situations in order.
to attract and maintain the allegiance of followers. Finally, Promise Keepers managed the exigence of opposition through various metaphoric and scriptural implant strategies of identification, designed to locate the order's place and function within the body of Christ. As a case study in the rhetoric of a religious order, Promise Keepers offers important insight into the discursive practices of contemporary evangelicals, as well as contemporary evangelical movement-organizations in a fragmented, postmodern society.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
Orientation to the Object of Study

Populist religious movements trace a rich and significant heritage across the rhetorical landscape that is the Euro-American evangelical tradition. Beginning with the Protestant Reformation, such movements may be understood historically, in their rhetorical dimensions, as constituting fitting responses to compelling religious and sociocultural exigencies. For it is in the context of perceived disequilibrium and disintegration that the pressing questions of identity and purpose, "Who are we?" "How ought we to live?" are given salient status. Insofar as these questions derive from, or are historically adapted to, religious values and practices, it is not surprising that religious movements should contribute significantly to the ebb and flow of discourse responding to such questions.

The advent of the Promise Keepers represents the latest, in a postmodern wave of evangelical religious orders, laying claim to the spiritual, social, cultural, and political destiny of America. A self-described, multicultural Christian men's movement, Promise Keepers constitutes an ambitious attempt at conjoining a racially, ethnically, and ecclesiastically diverse group of voices under a rubric of religious unity. Theirs is a rhetoric
which synthesizes sacred and secular vocabularies, interweaving them into a unifying vision constitutive of religious motive, purpose, and action.

Promise Keepers traces its origins to a conversation between then Colorado head football coach Bill McCartney and friend Dave Wardell while the two were driving to a meeting of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in Pueblo, Colorado. During the conversation McCartney stated his desire to see large gatherings of men come together "in the name of Jesus, worshipping and celebrating their faith together" (McCartney, 1995 p. 286). Encouraged by McCartney's pastor and the diligent prayer and discussion activity of a select group of some seventy-two men, the idea flowered into a full-scale evangelical movement (McCartney, 1995).

Initial support for the movement was moderate at best. Its first official conference, held in 1991 at Colorado University's Event Center, gathered 4,200 men. Subsequent conferences, held in 1992 and 1993, at Colorado University's Folsom stadium, however, drew 22,000 and 50,000 men respectively. The following year Promise Keepers went national, holding a half-dozen two-day stadium events across the nation, and drawing over 278,000 in 1994 and more than 727,000 in 1995. In 1996, twenty-two
conferences were held which drew an estimated 1.1 million men. By all accounts, the growth of Promise Keepers has been nothing short of phenomenal.

Promise Keepers' rhetoric, discretely situated, has moved well beyond the mass rally to include regional and local leadership seminars ("wake-up calls" and "breakout sessions"), pastor's conferences, and various lay group meetings. While stadium events continue to be its most visible rhetorical manifestation, Promise Keepers has also disseminated an array of rhetorical artifacts including an official three volume trilogy, numerous video and audio tapes, radio spots on local Christian radio stations, and an official website. Its staging of a mass rally in Washington D.C., on October 4th, 1997 -- broadcast over satellite television -- may well have marked the largest religious gathering in the history of the United States.

Promise Keepers is an uninstitutionalized, large collectivity, comprised of leaders and followers, which has emerged to bring about a program of change over a sustained period of time. It offers prescriptions for what must be done, who must do it, and how it must be accomplished. In these respects, Promise Keepers clearly qualifies as a movement (Stewart et al., 1994); and as a movement, Promise Keepers relies extensively on persuasion to achieve its aims.
With the rapid expansion of its audience base at the grassroots level, Promise Keepers has further developed into a highly centralized, yet very efficient organization. Located in Denver, Colorado, Promise Keepers' central office has maintained a staff of over four hundred employees and has overseen a budget exceeding one hundred million dollars. The organization is decidedly bureaucratic in structure. Divisions of labor are hierarchically organized and managed. Upper level positions generally require advanced education and relatively sophisticated levels of technical expertise. Its bureaucracy extends well-beyond Denver into fifty-two state offices and several international affiliates in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand which serve supplemental bureaucratic roles in brokering the flow of information between Promise Keeper central offices and local churches. With a view toward its movement and organization dimensions, Promise Keepers may be conceptualized as a movement-organization.

A final dimension of Promise Keepers concerns its ideology. The ideology of Promise Keepers is most readily discerned as evangelical in character. This dimension is clearly evidenced in its affiliation with historical evangelical movements and leaders ranging from Charles G. Finney and the "Second Great Awakening" to Billy Graham. It is also evidenced in its economic and ideological
affiliation with current evangelical leaders, among whom can be counted James Dobson, Pat Robertson, and Charles Colson. Finally, Promise Keepers' evangelical identity is evidenced in its membership in the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), a group in which membership is contingent upon express conformity to strict ethical and financial guidelines consistent with an evangelical Christian faith (ECFA, 1997). Taken together, then, Promise Keepers is an evangelical movement-organization.

The terms evangelical, movement, and organization may be centrally organized under the term religious order. In this dissertation, the term signifies Promise Keepers as an evangelical movement-organization. In addition, however, the term also connotes the notion of purpose. In its official Mission Statement (1997, online), Promise Keepers declares its purpose as:

a Christ-centered ministry dedicated to uniting men through vital relationships to become godly influences in their world...a spark in His hand to ignite a nationwide movement calling men from all denominational, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds to reconciliation, discipleship, and godliness.

As a religious order, then, Promise Keepers constitutes a hierarchically organized, collective response to the problem of social fragmentation in general, and of religious fragmentation in particular. It employs numerous rhetors and variegated rhetorical strategies and messages.
through a prodigious array of multi-media resources all of which are centrally directed by a core group of leaders and financed by a multi-million dollar organizational unit.

Justification for the Investigation

What significance does Promise Keepers hold such that it can be held up as an object of scholarly inquiry? Simply put, Promise Keepers is worthy of investigation because it has achieved a remarkable degree of influence in a relatively short period of time among audiences historically divided by religious doctrine, practice, and custom. Compared with Catholicism's institutional status, religious orders of the Protestant variety have, since the Reformation, seemingly built a tradition out of dis-unity. The first, second, and third Great Awakenings, the Churches of Christ, the Jesus People Movement, Southern Baptists, and Neo-Pentacostals -- to name just a few -- are each the result of intra-order division. Among Protestant orders, there neither is, nor ever has there been, the kind of global, tradition-steeped, institutional hierarchy present in Catholicism. It is from this angle that the expeditious growth and widespread influence of the Promise Keepers appears nothing short of remarkable.
Of what significance is Promise Keepers to rhetorical scholarship? In any order, religious or otherwise, relationships among leaders and followers, followers and followers, outsiders and insiders are guided by implicit and explicit principles governing motive, purpose, and action. Always and necessarily these principles are both a process and product of rhetoric. As Cheney (1991) argues, in examining specific cases of organized collectives, it is important to assess the interrelationships between identity, organization, and rhetoric. The nature of the organization -- its structure, values, practices, and categories -- reveals important features of its persuasive strategies and possibilities. Conversely, from the rhetoric of an organization, features of the organization can be inferred or "read" (Cheney, 1991, p.3).

There is ample precedent in the literature for exploring the role that rhetoric plays in creating and sustaining the ideological commitment of large, organized orders. Whether understood as operating according to necessary factors (Gerlach & Hine, 1968) or to functional categories, religious orders are structured by and around pressing exigencies. By exigency, I mean a problem crucial to an order's success or failure, capable of being ameliorated by persuasion, and requiring strategic rhetorical choices among competing alternatives (Bitzer, 1968).
For the rhetorical critic, it is important to determine the pressing exigencies which confront particular cases of religious orders and to investigate rhetoric's role in responding to them. My specific argument in this dissertation is that Promise Keepers is a religious order predicated on the rhetorical management of the exigencies of identity, recruitment, and opposition along differential tiers of its hierarchy. It is a process whose negotiation stands to reveal much about the nature and function of contemporary evangelicalism and its rhetoric in a postmodern, fragmented society.

Statement of the Problem

As a religious order operating within, across, and outside divergent interest communities -- and representing an ostensibly global religious body -- Promise Keepers faces complex rhetorical problems. First, any religious order which attempts to compete in the open marketplace that is the American religious infrastructure faces the important task of establishing a legitimate and viable identity for its followers. This is to say that in order for Promise Keepers to be successful it must address the question of "Who 'we' are" if it is to provide a viable target toward which individuals may direct their interests and allegiances.
In the case of the Promise Keepers, the problem of identity is exacerbated by two further concerns. Since it is relatively young, Promise Keepers does not have an easily recognizable set of symbols which mark off its identity from that of other religious orders. Unlike the Catholic Church, for instance, which may draw from a pool of time-honored, institutionalized symbols of identity and authority, Promise Keepers must, relatively speaking, build identity from the ground up.

On the other hand, the absence of clearly designated symbols of identity and authority may be Promise Keepers' greatest rhetorical asset. As Cheney (1985) argues in his examination of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, the institutionalization of identity places important constraints on the extent to which individuals may speak and act in any given situation. Thus, in addressing the problem of the cold war nuclear threat, the U.S. Catholic Bishops, acting within the authoritative parameters of their identity as moral agents, were limited by this very identity in speaking authoritatively in the realm of politics. Venturing too far into the latter realm would not only raise questions regarding their political authority, but would also call into question their identity as Catholic bishops (Cheney, 1985). Relatively free from these constraints, Promise Keepers must,
nevertheless, construct a unique and readily discernible identity among numerous and varied competitors in order to accomplish its purposes. The means by which Promise Keepers constructs identity, and the symbols which authorize (grant authority to) that identity are significant rhetorical concerns.

Second, Promise Keepers must attract, mold, and maintain followers. Courses of action must be prescribed and justified according to the religious sensibilities of a wide variety of audience types (Stewart et al., 1995). Promise Keepers' initial recruitment efforts were limited to the area in and around Boulder, Colorado. As Gerlach and Hine (1968) have observed, religious movements of the evangelical variety, especially in their incipient stages, are tied to particular geographies and often built along a pre-existing network of interpersonal relationships. Thus, it will be important to explore the role that the local evangelical subculture in and around Boulder, Colorado, played in the development of Promise Keepers.

Later, however, Promise Keepers' recruitment efforts succeeded in attracting millions of individuals from across the nation and even other countries to local, regional, and national gatherings. That Promise Keepers succeeded in gathering recruits beyond its initial locality in a relatively brief period of time is a matter
of historical record. The means by which Promise Keepers accomplished this is a matter worthy of scholarly investigation.

Finally, Promise Keepers must contend with opposition. Stewart et. al., (1994) contend that social movements by their very nature encounter institutionalized forms of opposition. In the case of the Promise Keepers, opposition arises both from within and outside of its evangelical milieu. Evangelical interest communities have been particularly critical of Promise Keepers for their unbiblical ecumenicalism (or inclusivism). In a booklet entitled Promise Keepers and the Forgotten Promise (1995), published by the Baptist World Mission, Ernest Pickering writes:

Promise Keepers is as serious an attack upon biblical separatism and fundamentalism as the [churches have] seen since the rise of Billy Graham and his ecumenical evangelism a generation ago. It is going to cause major problems for pastors who are trying to maintain a biblical position (p. 3).

Other critics observe that Promise Keepers reaches across traditional evangelical borders to embrace individuals of various religious persuasion -- including Roman Catholics -- who disagree on basic issues such as how a person is spiritually saved (Hagopian & Wilson, 1996). These authors maintain that Promise Keepers deliberately frames descriptions of Christian belief in inordinately broad terms, thereby opening the way for any
number of heretical beliefs to abide in fellowship with sound doctrine. The scriptural mandate for unity, these critics maintain, is not what is believed about ethnicity or skin color, but what is believed about Christ. While Promise Keepers has apparently been successful in sensitizing audiences to racial prejudice and divisive religious separatism, the perception exists that among some evangelical critics that such sensitivity has been purchased at the price of sound spiritual discernment over what constitutes true biblical unity and true biblical separation.

Feminist interest communities, on the other hand, argue that Promise Keepers represents a threat to social progress generally and to female independence in particular. The National Organization for Women, for instance, has argued that Promise Keepers advocates a patriarchal view of male-female relations which, however ostensibly benevolent, can only result in the systematic subordination of women.

Whatever merit such criticisms may have in illuminating Promise Keepers' strengths and weaknesses, they offer little insight into how this particular religious order has managed to keep its critics at bay. Passing diatribes concerning Promise Keepers' dangerous ecumenicalism and female oppression do little to describe
and explain the rhetorical conditions in and strategies by which Promise Keepers has negotiated the important exigence of opposition.

The general problem in this study concerns how Promise Keepers was able to move from the status of "mere idea" to a full-blown religious order. In view of the aforementioned exigencies, the specific questions under investigation are: What role does rhetoric play in Promise Keepers' attempts at managing the exigencies of identity, recruitment, and opposition? And, what do the answers to these questions reveal about the nature of evangelical rhetoric in a postmodern, fragmented society?

Framework for the Investigation

In the Rhetoric of Motives (1969), Kenneth Burke defines rhetoric as "the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (p. 43). Burke also recognizes that persuasion arises amidst a plethora of divergent and competing interests. Such conflict is endemic to the nature of language use and to the nature of man in relation to society. Language is, by its very nature, divisive (Burke, 1969). Its use leads to categorical abstractions, divisions, and separations which are naturally inclusive of some elements in society and, therefore, exclusive of others (Burke, 1969). Paradoxically, out of this divisiveness comes the
necessary prerequisite for the aim of rhetoric. Rhetoric arises as a communicative, cooperative response to the problem of social division. It is the means of achieving social unity, of adjoining divided interests to bring together a divided people into substantial communion (Burke, 1969). It is through a sharing of substantial interests that a community is formed. Alternatively, it might be said that rhetoric is the process by which various interest communities are formed.

Burke's theory of persuasion is closely related to his central concept of identification. Identification may be viewed as both state and product of rhetoric's capacity to make communal connections (Cheney, 1983). As Burke (1969) explains:

A is not identical with his colleague B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so (p. 20).

If identification is both state and product, it is also process. That is, identification is a process or method by which divided interests become adjoined. Paradoxically, it is also a method by which interests adjoined become divided. This is the paradox of language manifested in the process of identification: "Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division." Identification is compensatory to division" (Burke, 1969, p.22).
Identification is the primary means by which identity is constructed and negotiated. At the individual level, a person acts to eliminate the divisions of society by identifying with some target(s); i.e., persons, families, groups, and collectivities; and to a lesser extent, values, goals, knowledge, activities, and objects (Cheney, 1983). The process of identification, however, occurs on both individual and corporate levels. That is, identification by the individual always necessarily occurs within concentric and conflicting bodies of larger corporate identities (Cheney, 1983). A person comes to "think of himself as 'belonging' to some special body more or less clearly defined...or to various combinations of these" (Burke, 1973, p. 268). Thus, for instance, one may identify himself as a member of a racially mixed church while still seeing himself as a member of a particular race.

Crucial to the forming and performing of individual and corporate identities is the naming or labeling function of rhetoric (Burke, 1973). A person can be at once a Southern Baptist and an African-American. In this way, names, labels, and titles become the foci for larger corporate identities. They carry with them other identifying "baggage" in the form of values, interests, and so forth (Cheney, 1983, p.146). Moreover, the linking of our personal with our corporate identities results in
an increased sense of personal status and even prestige. As one identifies with some corporate unit, be it a church, company, city, or nation, he comes to have an increased sense of self-worth in proportion to his positive appraisal of the unit (Cheney, 1983).

Rhetorically considered, the process of identification can be viewed as a strategy by which an interest community attempts to secure the allegiance of a prospective other. One oft-cited strategy is that by which a rhetor seeks to find common ground with an audience, as when an urban politician speaks of her "country roots" to her rural interest community. Such strategies may work on conscious or unconscious levels. For the rhetorical critic it is important to discover the ways in which identification works at levels not immediately apparent.

Negative strategies of identification, as when the Israelites are associated with the Philistines, work to create an attitude of disrepair at an unconscious level, even while other, perhaps positive, identifications are being made at a conscious level. What this suggests is that identification is a multi-tiered rather than uni-dimensional process. Whether working between individuals, or between individuals and a collective, or even between the individual and his/her self, identification persuades
by uniting disparate entities into a common whole, providing a framework of motives further conducive of action.

The impetus for this study follows from the assumption that the rhetoric of religious orders is strategic in design and implementation. Consequently, this study is concerned to discover the rhetorical strategies used by Promise Keepers to accomplish its purposes. Specific attention will be given to the identificational and metaphoric strategies used by Promise Keepers in their efforts to manage the exigencies of identity, recruitment, and opposition.

Data for this study were selected from a comprehensive range of sources. These include published literature, audio and video tapes, and Internet materials produced by Promise Keepers. Telephone interviews with Promise Keepers' leaders who occupy national and regional positions of authority provided additional insight into the (rhetorical) nature of this religious order.

The remainder of this study is composed of six chapters. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature relevant to the study of evangelical movement organizations. Chapter Two also includes a discussion of rhetoric's role in relation to social order. Chapter Three contains a systematic treatment of this study's methodological approach. Chapters Four, Five, and Six
explore the role that rhetoric plays in Promise Keepers' attempts at managing the exigencies of identity, recruitment, and opposition. Chapter Seven concludes this study with a review of its findings and a discussion of their implications for the future of evangelicalism and its rhetoric.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In order to better understand the guiding objectives and assumptions undergirding this rhetorical study, it will be useful to review the literature pertaining to each of this study's conceptual terms for Promise Keepers. To reiterate, Promise Keepers is here conceptualized as an evangelical movement-organization whose more abstract characterization falls under the rubric of religious order. Consequently, this chapter will be concerned with relevant studies which lend greater conceptual meaning to the terms evangelical, evangelicalism, popular religious movements, organizations, and order. Each conceptual term will be considered with a view to its relationship to rhetoric.

This chapter begins by examining the meaning of evangelicalism and the role that democracy has played in shaping its rhetorical character. Next, this chapter will review relevant case studies of popular religious movements to discover the role that rhetoric has also played in their development. This chapter next reviews the relationship between organizations and rhetoric. The next section provides a Burkeian account of the rhetorical nature of social order. Finally, this chapter concludes by
bringing together the primary elements in this review to form reasonable conjectures and propositions concerning the rhetorical nature of the Promise Keepers.

Rhetoric and Evangelicalism

Promise Keepers may be appropriately, albeit indeterminately, placed within a religious milieu known as evangelicalism (cf., Noll et al., 1994; Rifkin & Howard, 1979; Wells, 1993). The term evangelical is derived from the Greek word euangelion, meaning "good news" (Rifkin & Howard, 1979, p. 100). So understood, it has come to mean something on the order of the good news that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save humans from the consequences of sin by reconciling them to God.

Defining evangelicalism is far more problematic. Disagreement persists among scholars over whether or not the term is even useful as a general descriptive category (Abraham, 1984; Marsden, 1984; Rifkin and Howard, 1979). What does seem to be agreed upon, however, is that the term signifies a sweltering array of both conflicting and compatible interests and ideologies whose cumulative impact is historically manifested in an ongoing internal tension between unity and diversity. It is perhaps a matter of some irony that finds in evangelicalism's internal dynamic a secular analogue in the contemporary problem of postmodernism.
Historians of evangelicalism generally use the term in two senses (Marsden, 1991; Noll, et al., 1994). In its macroscopic sense, evangelicalism refers to a relatively distinct body of indigenous Protestant Christian movements, particularly evident in America, Canada, and Western Europe. Among the most prominent of these movements may be counted various awakenings and revivals which have occurred in America between 1730 to the present day.

In its microscopic sense, evangelicalism refers to an identifiable set of foundational beliefs that are generally understood to constitute the evangelical worldview. These beliefs are 1) the conviction that the Bible's content is wholly reliable and constitutes the final authority (sola scriptura) governing Christian faith and practice; 2) the conviction that salvation is a personal and necessary choice for the "true believer"; 3) the conviction that the only means of true (religious) salvation is through a life-changing experience granted by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ; and 4) the conviction that the individual believer is responsible for communicating the message of Christ to a lost and dying world (Noll, et al., 1994; Marsden, 1991; Rifkin and Howard, 1979).
Taken together, these beliefs constitute evangelicalism's ideological core, the foundational premises out of which individual and corporate evangelical identity is rhetorically manifest. Consequently, any movement or movement-organization which lays claim to the title evangelical will necessarily manifest, in some degree, all of these beliefs; otherwise, it will fall short, signifying something less than, or other than, evangelical.

Marsden (1991) argues that this account is sufficiently broad to cover a divergent range of traditions including:

- holiness churches,
- pentecostals,
- traditionalist Methodists,
- all sorts of Baptists,
- Presbyterians,
- black churches in all these traditions,
- fundamentalists,
- pietist groups,
- Reformed and Lutheran confessionals,
- Anabaptists such as Mennonites,
- Churches of Christ,
- Christians, and some Episcopalians, to name only some of the most prominent types (p. 5).

Recent statistical estimates suggest that some fifty million or more individuals subscribe to an evangelical worldview (cf., Hunter, 1983; Rifkin & Howard, 1979, p. 100).

Historians of religion often trumpet evangelicalism's susceptibility to and selective appropriation of the influences of popular, secular culture. Nathan Hatch (1984; 1989), for instance, argues for what he sees as the ineluctable impact of democratization on American
Christianity to explain the rhetorical character of evangelicalism. For Hatch, it was American democracy's unwavering belief in the inherent value of the common man which led to evangelicalism's shift from the opaque theology of the classically educated few to a simple, yet forceful rhetoric of the masses. Similar observations had been made much earlier in Tocqueville's descriptions of the American Protestantism (Kessler, 1994). The style of Christianity which Toqueville described was democratic in at least three respects: it was audience centered, intellectually open to all, and organizationally pluralistic and innovative (Kessler, 1994).

The democratic ideal that placed a premium on individual autonomy and the free exercise of thought found its evangelical analogue in the inherent capacity of man to divine religious truth for himself (Hatch, 1984). All that was needed was a message and a voice capable of simply, yet powerfully, conveying this truth. The voices which rose included Dwight L. Moody, Charles, G. Finney, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Billy Sunday, Billy Graham (Hatch, 1989; Marsden, 1991). With the possible exception of Edwards, each of these speakers adopted rhetorical styles which were plain and direct. As a result, evangelical rhetoric shifted from a content-orientation to an audience-orientation. What was required
was a rhetoric capable of appealing directly and
powerfully to popular sensibilities; and in so doing,
provided its own internal justification (Hatch, 1989).

The new emphasis upon the audience had an important
consequence for the way in which the validity of any
religious rhetor or ideology came to be measured. The
authority to speak and act for God became, in essence, a
function of the sheer numbers of converts gained. Indeed,
it was the faith in the majority's authority which led
Toqueville to question the lasting power of such faith-
movements. For Tocqueville, the religious freedom afforded
by democracy suggested a new kind of rhetorical bondage
under which evangelicals labored, the reductive
conditioning of slogans (Hatch, 1989).

At a macroscopic level, democracy's impact upon
contemporary evangelicalism is seen in the bewildering
array of evangelical churches, organizations,
universities, and mass media. At the microscopic level, it
is exemplified in the equally bewildering array of
evangelical doctrines and practices. The effect has led at
least one commentator to characterize contemporary
evangelical rhetoric as "empty" in moral meaning and
devoid of divine truth (Wells, 1993, p. 300). In truth,
however, American evangelical rhetoric has, for some time,
been driven by the interests of popular audiences in framing both the issues under consideration, as well as the mode of communication in which to address them.

Given the above, it is not difficult to speculate on the kinds of rhetorical features that a postmodern, evangelical rhetoric might have. First, the democratic impulse ensures that there will always exist the potential for a rhetoric of unity. Such rhetoric presupposes the very divisive and conflicting interests that are the hallmark of democracy. Insofar as American evangelicals continue to be motivated by the belief in individualism -- the right to choose one's personal religious course -- we can expect an evangelical rhetoric to be most powerfully evidenced in its exploitation of the tension between individual autonomy and corporate unity.

Secondly, when the focus of the persuasive efforts is directed at the tension between individual autonomy and corporate unity, we might expect an evangelical rhetoric to maximize the impulse toward unity by concentrating on those individual interests likely to generate the most conflict. We might also expect that a truly ambitious rhetoric, a rhetoric aimed at accumulating large numbers, would target as many different interests as possible. This is to say that we would expect the targeted interests to
be important in their own right, but that their cumulative impact would serve to increase the tension between individual autonomy and corporate unity.

Third, since evangelical rhetoric targets a common people, we can expect evangelical rhetoric to be audience-centered. In this, we can further expect an emphasis to be placed on the layman's role in fulfilling the evangelical mission with a concomitant emphasis on individual authority, as opposed to the authority of the Church or its leaders. Furthermore, we might also expect an absence of philosophical or theological depth in favor of an ideology readily reduced to basic or fundamental social interests. It is in the realm of the social, rather than in the theological, that the interests of the common people are most easily identified.

Rhetoric and Popular Religious Movements

Having discussed a general orientation for understanding evangelicalism, I now move to discuss several case studies which have explored the role and nature of rhetoric in evangelical movements. Hensley (1975) examined the rhetorical practices of the Disciples of Christ during the nineteenth century. An indigenous, evangelical movement born in the midst of early nineteenth century frontier revivals, the Disciples' rhetorical vision was informed by a cluster of fantasy themes wedding the American dream to the millennial fulfillment of God's
kingdom on earth. The vision contained a clearly delineated line of dramatic action, consisting of three major phases.

The first phase was grounded in rhetoric that argued for Christian world evangelism. God's kingdom on earth was to be realized only to the extent that his people actively and unwaveringly were committed to the evangelizing of a lost world. The second phase was grounded in a rhetoric of unity. This phase was particularly important in an era when existing churches were proud of their differences, even bitter and combative in their relations with one another. The Disciples' drama presented creedal orthodoxy as an evil force of human invention which elevated human theology over and above biblical authority. The vision called for the abandonment of all theological systems as requirements for church membership.

The final phase was grounded in a rhetoric of restoration. The drama of restoration was modeled after the pattern of birth and growth in the early Christian church, a back to basics approach beginning with the lordship of Jesus Christ as the only creed required of an individual or a church. Interestingly, this drama called for a renaming of obedient believers as "Christian" or "Disciples of Christ," as opposed to the sectarian names of human origin such as "Methodist," or "Presbyterian." The Disciples' rhetorical vision incorporated key elements
from contemporary cultural dramas such as liberty, rural-agrarian supremacy, rugged individualism, and human equality. Such dramas were recontextualized into a millennial framework, arguing for America as the chosen Garden of God, and the Disciples as the workers given the privilege of ushering in his kingdom on earth.

The Disciples' rhetoric, wrought by wedding common cultural themes and biblical Scripture into a New World framework, squares nicely with Promise Keepers' ecumenical mission. The rhetoric of Promise Keepers also contains ecumenical themes woven from the fabric of secular and evangelical culture. Interestingly, the three phases constitutive of dramatic action in the Disciples' rhetoric mirror nicely both the content and the function of Promise Keepers' Seven Promises. In terms of content, both the Disciples and Promise Keepers employ a rhetoric of evangelical commitment and ecumenical unity. Similar to the Disciples' functional phases, Promise Keepers' Seven Promises serve as a motive for religious action.

Balswick (1972) studied the Jesus People Movement using participant-observation techniques. He reported that the Jesus movement is constituted by a very diverse, loosely organized group of adherents whose unifying feature is the belief that humans can overcome their alienation and find real meaning in life only through a
personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The movement was made up of recruits from the so-called youth counterculture.

According to Balswick these believers consciously integrated recontextualized features of their counterculture including styles of dress, musical tastes, and a general emphasis on subjective experience into the context of their religious lifestyle. Moreover, in linguistic expressions such as "having an eternal high," "turning on to Jesus," and "taking a trip with Jesus," Balswick found evidence of the tendency to appropriate metaphorically counter-culture terminologies and experiences into the context of religious belief and action.

The theology of the movement was described as pragmatic. Faith in Jesus is attractive because it works, freeing one from various ills such as drug addiction. The Jesus people were found to adhere to a relatively narrow view of biblical authority. It was typical of these adherents to use, unquestioningly, statements from the Bible in explaining and justifying their approach to life. Indeed, the conclusions reached from a subjective experience with Jesus served to fortify the believer against rational attacks upon the authenticity of Scripture.
This study provides evidence for the ways in which individuals who participate in evangelical movements rhetorically negotiate their religious identity in relationship to other religious groups, as well as to the larger culture. It also suggests that there is an important relationship between rhetoric and subjective religious experience at the movement level.

Lane (1973) studied the Catholic Pentecostal Movement (hereinafter CPM) from a sociological perspective. The direct catalyst for the emergence of CPM is traced to two lay faculty members at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. In 1967, the two reportedly received the gift of tongues after having prayed with and for each other subsequent to their attendance at a Protestant neo-Pentecostal religious meeting. In the two months that followed, twenty faculty and students at Duquesne had formed a prayer group that involved charismatic activities.

By 1973, the movement had garnered an estimated one hundred thousand recruits in the United States. CPM prayer meetings, initially occurring at the local level, emphasized the subjective, experiential features of prayer, a notion in sharp contrast with the traditional ritualism of mainline Catholicism. Initial recruits were given orientation lectures on prayer group activity and were exposed to the spiritual testimony of individuals with whom the recruits were most likely to identify.
The movement developed a formal network of regional and national bureaucracies. The Communication Center at Notre Dame dispensed books, manuals, and cassette tapes from recognized leaders of the CPM. CPM also published a monthly newsletter, The New Covenant, in which a variety of the organization's concerns were discussed. Notre Dame also maintained a directory of local chapters and houses the annual national conventions.

The relationship between charismatics and the larger Catholic church was viewed, for the most part, by both as ancillary rather than oppositional. Some urban parishes which had experienced significant loss in membership were turned over to representatives of the movement in the hope that lay participation would be renewed. Some of these parishes witnessed a remarkable recovery, and yet they remained under the auspices of the formal Catholic hierarchy.

Perhaps more than any other single movement, the CPM movement models a striking resemblance to the origin and development of Promise Keepers. Both movements trace their immediate origins to a Spirit-inspired calling of two of its founding members. Both movements began and continue to draw membership at the grass roots level. Both movements have engendered indigenous rhetorical artifacts (e.g., books, tapes, magazines). As with the CPM, Promise Keepers is described as a para-church organization operating in
loose cooperation with established religious authorities. Both movements emphasize subjective experience in the context of small group meetings. And finally, both movements share a common anti-theological bias which has become commonplace among contemporary evangelical movements.

Finally, an important study by Gerlach and Hine (1968) identified five factors which contribute significantly to the creation and growth of modern religious movements. The factors were the result of empirically grounded procedures among different Pentecostal groups. The factors are 1) an acephalous, reticulate organizational structure, 2) face-to-face recruitment along lines of pre-existing significant social relationships, 3) commitment generated through an act or experience, 4) change-oriented ideology which offers a simple master plan presented in symbolic and easily communicated terms, coupled with a sense of sharing in the control and rewards of destiny and a feeling of personal worth and power. The final factor involves the presence of opposition, actual or perceived.

Rhetoric and Organizations

Drawing extensively upon the work of Kenneth Burke, organizational communication scholars have discussed the notion of identity at the individual and organizational levels (Cheney, 1985; 1991; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987;
In general, identity has been conceptualized as the core beliefs, assumptions, values, attitudes, preferences, gestures, habits, rules, etc. that make up the self concept. Each identity contains certain rules and other guidelines about who we are, how we are to act, and what is important to us.

For Burke, the labeling of identities is extremely important because of the creative powers of language both to make distinctions and to effect congregation and segregation of individuals in various arrangements. The process of naming points up a paradoxical aspect of identity; for while the act of naming suggests commonality among those persons included under the same terminological umbrella, it also implies separateness from others who do not or cannot use the same terms of self-description (Cheney, 1983). Thus we have both congregation and segregation (Burke, 1973).

Clearly, many sources of identity, including attachment to one's religion and religious group, entail "identification by antithesis," or division from other ideologies and groups. And although labels such as Baptist may first appear to be merely descriptive, they can function in highly prescriptive ways in social practices (Cheney, 1983).
From the perspective of social identity theory, a person's self-concept actually consists of multiple social identities, each of which is linked to different social groups -- what Burke refers to as "corporate identity" (Duncan, 1962). Thus, it is useful to conceptualize individuals as having organizational, gender, occupational, ethnic, and national identities. By logical extension, it is also reasonable to posit one's religion or religious affiliation as part a parcel of their corporate identity. Some of these categories are assigned; others are joined voluntarily. Of central concern, then, is how certain identities come to prominence amidst a plethora of competing identities and how any given organization manages (Cheney, 1991) these identities in the construction of a hierarchal order -- in this case, the management of a religious order.

George Cheney's work is particularly helpful in conceptualizing the ways in which organizations manage the exigence of identity. Cheney (1983) maintains that organizations frequently facilitate corporate identification through their myriad means of communication. The organization initiates this process by communicating its values, goals, and information in the form of guidelines for individual and collective action (Cheney, 1983). The member may then complete the process of socialization by adopting or adapting the
organization's interests, and doing what is best for the organization, thereby developing a salient identification with the organization as a target (Cheney, 1983).

The success of any organizational inducement is measured by extent to which the individual is able to see his identity (i.e., his interests, his values, his goals) reflected in the given organization. Importantly, when the outer voice (the organization) can be traced to a particular rhetorical artifact or set of artifacts, it is possible to isolate strategies of identification: appeals to individuals to accept targets as their own, or perhaps make more salient identifications with already valued targets (Cheney, 1985).

The nature and types of identificational strategies may vary within and across organizations. In an examination of house organs and periodicals of the State Farm Insurance Companies, Cheney (1983) found clear evidence of common ground, antithesis, and the "transcendent we" identification strategies. Of particular importance were the rhetorical tactics used within a common ground identificational strategy. These tactics included "expressions of concern for the individual," "recognition of individual contributions," "espousal of shared values," and "testimonials by employees" (Cheney, 1983, pp. 150-153). This study is important both because it represents a concrete application of Burke's theory of
identification and because it shows how consistently certain strategies and tactics are used over time in the rhetoric of an organization.

As Cheney (1991) asserts, organizational messages should be examined with a view to their identificational strategies and tactics if for no other reason than because corporations invest significant amounts of time, money, and creative energy in the production of persuasive messages. And while identification is often engineered with the organization's interests in mind, such identification must have its source within the individual. Individuals who identify with organizational interests must make their own contribution in accord with the organization's interests (Cheney, 1991).

Other studies of organizational rhetoric support this view. In studying social action by mainline Protestant churches during the 1970's, James Wood (1975) found that a number of their leaders were able to espouse positions considerably more liberal than those held by their congregations when those positions were tied to the core values of the organization. In this way church leaders exploited the ambiguities of terms such as social justice, using organizationally held values to warrant individually chosen action (Wood, 1975).
Using Chester Barnard's (1968) definition of an organization as a "system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons" (p.73), it is possible to reduce the nature and function of Promise Keepers' qua organization to an essentially communicative system. As Cheney (1991) argues, such a conceptualization of organizations makes it possible to study them in their uniquely rhetorical aspects, as an amalgam of strategically offered, rhetorically situated messages disseminated to differentiated publics -- including internal and external publics -- for the purpose of maintaining organizational viability (Cheney, 1991).

Rhetoric and Social Order

Kenneth Burke contends that the nature of social order is founded upon the principle of the negative. He describes the principle as rooted in the very essence of language. It is the one great principle of language man has added to nature (Burke, 1968). To arrive at this conclusion, Burke begins by examining two different domains of reality. The first domain is the realm of nature (or motion). In the natural realm, states Burke, the negative does not properly exist (Burke, 1968). Rather, everything in nature exists as it is, positively. Every image given in nature is a positive one. In nature we have trees. We don't have non-trees. Indeed there exists no natural referent, no image, for the concept of
negativity. For Burke, the attempt to find the negative in nature is as absurd as trying to find the square root of minus one.

The second domain of reality is rooted in the symbolic. It is here where Burke discovers the negative both in principle and in practice (Burke, 1970). In practice, the negative finds its linguistic instantiations in *no*, *not*, *un*, *dis*, and other related terms given in discourse (Burke, 1970). Here, one may negate the positive image of a tree, and thus make the assertion that such and such is not a tree. One also finds, in the symbolic realm, the presence of the negative command -- "Thou shalt not."

In principle the negative is felt intuitively in the practice of communication. All humans use symbols to communicate. And yet, to do so, humans must intuitively grasp the notion that symbols are fundamentally distinct from that to which they refer. The word is not the thing. The symbol *cat* is not the object to which it refers. Similarly, humans have an innate grasp of the figurative in language. Moreover, humans have another kind of intuitive feel for the negative in their ability to use different modes of communication. In using metaphors, or other figurative devices, humans have a feel for what is not to be taken literally in language. That is, they know when language is not being used to refer to the literal. This is particularly important when symbols are used to
communicate increasingly abstract ideals such as those found in religious discourse, particularly in its moral dimension. Burke uses this intuitive feel for language use as evidence of the existence of the principle of the negative (Burke, 1970).

Thus, we arrive at two principles concerning the relationship between the negative and language: 1) the negative, in principle, provides the basis for human symbol use, over and against nature. Hence the negative is essential to human communication; 2) the practice of the negative leads to the negative commandments, the thou shalt nots, and hence "opens up man's rational and moral life to...linguistic analysis" (Rueckert, 1963, p. 130).

When the shalt nots accumulate, they give rise to hierarchy or social order (Foss et al., 1991). They may be actualized in religious values or in particular laws. In each case, the values or laws either explicitly or implicitly negate a logical or positive alternative. Thus, the commandment thou shalt not kill both implies and negates the positive image of killing. The accumulation of thou shalt nots results in a hierarchy of such terms upon which societies are based. That is, the presence of many negative commandments gives rise to social order in which those commandments serve as moral foundations (Duncan, 1962).
Importantly, the negative, more than just a matter of principle, prescribes action. That is, it compels action which requires choice -- to obey or not to obey. Once the command is ushered, humans are granted the choice to rebel against (i.e., to negate) the command or to obey it. In either case, the choice is an inherently moral one. Since it is made by humans over/against/for other humans, the very act of choosing implicates human morality: The choice implicit in the command makes humans moral. In this way, the negative derived through language, and instantiated in the negative commandment, ultimately produces morality in man (Rueckert, 1963). Consequently, language becomes the foci for all human morality and moral discourse. Without the negative implicit in language, moral action, or action based on conceptions of right and wrong behavior, (including religious behavior) would not exist (Burke, 1970).

In any order or hierarchy derived through the negative, there exist inevitable relationships among certain dramatic (motivating) principles whose dialectical operations keep the order in a constant state of irresolvable tension. The first of these principles is perfection, whereby the elements of hierarchy are motivated consciously to strive for the completion or ideal state intrinsic to their kind (Burke, 1970). Importantly, perfection is a relative principle. Its
conceptualization is wrought through names or labels and attendant terminology which designate particular manifestations in particular hierarchies. Put another way, hierarchal elements attempt to live out the full implications of the terms by which such implications are identified.

In identifying individuals as Promise Keepers, we would expect a corresponding motive for the (perfect) keeping of certain promises. The perfect Promise Keeper is thus one who continually strives to keep his promises. Together, the principles of hierarchy and perfection explain how unification occurs among those who are involved in a hierarchy. And while the culminating or top stage of the hierarchy may best represent that hierarchy's ideal, "all the stages are infused with the spirit of the Ultimate Stage" in which each little act will share in the meaning of the total act (Burke, 1969, p. 118).

Out of the desire for perfection a second motivating principle, guilt, arises (Burke, 1970). Guilt is the anxiety or unresolved tension that comes from the inability to keep the negative commandments. Guilt arises out of the negation of the principles of social order, and their expression in hierarchy (Burke, 1935). While the actual principles themselves may vary, guilt itself remains a pervasive theme in all societies predicated on hierarchy (Duncan, 1962).
Burke discusses two related classes of guilt which emerges out of any social order. First, there is guilt that is imputed categorically on some group in virtue of its being identified with a sinful past (Burke, 1968). This kind of guilt, analogous to the notion of "original sin," makes transgressors out of individuals merely because of their membership status in the targeted group (Burke, 1969, p. 148). As individuals associate themselves with certain guilty groups, they become guilty by association even if, as individuals, they have committed no violation. Thus, White-European males may be branded as "evil" before any act is committed.

A second class of guilt is akin to actual sin. Here, criminal impulses (motives) are located within the individual. Interestingly, Burke understands the temptation to actual sin as rooted in the failure of imputed guilt to find a "correspondingly absolute means of cancellation" by categorical guilt (Burke, cited in Duncan, 1962, p. 131). Guilt is therefore intrinsic to hierarchal order. As Burke says, social order induces guilt, "For who can keep the commandments!" (Burke, 1970, p. 4). In this we can see the dialectical tension between what Promise Keepers calls The Power of the Promise Kept, (perfection) and what Burke would undoubtedly understand.
as "the power of the promise unkept" (guilt). It is this tension which contributes to the inherent motivating tension in any social order.

Out of guilt comes yet another motive: purification. Purification occurs in the attempt for hierarchal members to purge themselves of the polluting (linguistic) conditions which give rise to guilt (Foss et al., 1991). In social orders, Burke explains, transgressions must be defined clearly by those who would lead us. At the same time, however, leaders must make clear how the order can be absolved of guilt (Duncan, 1962). Burke identifies two ways in which guilt may be absolved in a social order: victimage and mortification.

Victimage is the means by which we cleanse the group of inherited guilt. Given such guilt in society, Burke says, it follows logically that the compensatory sacrifice of the ritually perfect victim would be the corresponding norm (Burke, 1969). Importantly, acts of victimage are wrought by a process of identification "through the manipulation of oneself or others of the negative and positive values within any given hierarchy" (Rueckert, 1963, p. 151)

The sacrifice of the ritually perfect victim, in so far as it affects social order, can then be thought of as a kind of purge. In an act of victimage one seeks to place the blame for one's guilt on an external referent -- a
scapegoat (Foss et al., 1991). Thus Hitler, for instance, purged Germany's guilt by the blood of the scapegoated Jews.

It is important to recognize that the principle of victimage takes many forms, though always in the name of some great transcendent principle. In addition, Burke notes that the scapegoat in society is often confronted in a highly fragmented fashion. As Duncan (1962) explains:

In place of great community dramas of redemption, in which we face our devils as we call on God...to protect us from them, we hope to keep the devil on the run by casting him in many different and minor roles. We believe that when we break up threats to security, and deal with them as isolated fragments, we can deal with them more easily (p.128).

Speaking for Burke, Duncan goes on to note that such fragmentation, while understandable in contemporary postmodern society, reduces the efficacy of the victim. Dividing the enemy into so many specialized pieces adds "up to a kind of organized inanity that is socially morbid" (Burke, cited in Duncan, p. 128). Thus, Burke would have the inanity of our trivial scapegoats overcome by a single, total victim.

In contrast to victimage, where guilt is transferred to an external referent, mortification is the process in which we make ourselves suffer for our guilt or sins (Burke, 1970). Mortification is self-inflicted punishment, self-sacrifice, or self-imposed denials and restrictions designed to slay impulses, or aspects of the self (Duncan,
Mortification thus becomes a kind of freeing of energy for higher life, a life beyond death and thus beyond the senses (Duncan, 1962).

Moving from perfection to guilt to purification, we arrive at a final principle implicit in hierarchy -- redemption. Redemption is a kind of symbolic rebirth, over and against the elements of guilt which have been mortified (Duncan, 1962). Redemption is a state in which the individual experiences a change in perspective or identity. Thus, the drama of social hierarchy becomes the process of building and finding the true self. It represents the individual and corporate attempt to discover and maintain identity, one in which acts can be done in purposeful attempt to move toward an ultimate form of perfection.

Viewed from this perspective, then, Promise Keepers is a kind of religious order, predicated on universal dramatic principles constitutive of (religious) motive and purpose. To participate as an individual in the Promise Keepers is to participate in a religious order. And yet, participation entails more than just the individual in relation to a vision or ideology; it also involves the individual relating himself to other individuals who choose similarly to participate in the same drama. That is, participation involves both the individual "I" and the corporate "we."
Summary and Implications of Literature Review

The above literature review provides a conceptual delineation of this study's key terms and their relationship to rhetoric. The review on the literature concerning evangelicalism, shows how the forces of democratization and religion work together to shape the character of evangelical rhetoric. It is an audience-centered rhetoric whose effectiveness may depend on how well it negotiates the tension between divisive individual interest and corporate unity.

The review of popular evangelical movements provides evidence of how this tension has been rhetorically manifested in evangelicalism's history. The Disciples of Christ and the Jesus People Movement are case studies in which the appropriation of cultural symbols of identity and authority are used as a means of sanctioning a populist religious vision. Balswick's study, in particular, points towards the evangelical tendency to integrate secular and sacred vocabularies toward pragmatically-acceptable ends.

Hensley's study is a reminder that evangelical rhetoric is goal-directed and action-oriented and that its ultimate aim is found in the call to religious unity. His study further shows how integral to religious identity is the process of identification. Lane's study provides a structural account of how a new religious order develops
from the ground up. It also shows how integral to an order's success is the management of recruitment and of opposition exigencies. Gerlach and Hine provide this study with a further scholarly justification for using the analytic categories of recruitment and opposition -- here conceptualized as exigencies -- in the study of evangelical movements.

Drawing upon the work of Kenneth Burke, scholarship centering on organizations alerts us to the interrelationships among identity, organization, and rhetoric. Crucial to this understanding is the notion that organizations manage identity at individual and corporate levels. Organizations employ rhetoric strategically to mediate the conflicting interests within and across internal and external audiences. In Cheney's view, to negotiate conflicting interests is to manage identity. As an organization, Promise Keepers must also manage the exigence of identity at the individual and corporate level.

Burke's concept of social order as rooted in an essential function of language and organized around the allied terms of the negative, hierarchy, guilt, purification, and redemption also bear directly on the nature of Promise Keepers as a religious order. Having provided a conceptual overview for understanding Promise Keepers and why rhetoric is important to it, I now move to
discuss a methodology grounded in Burke's notion of identification which will be used to answer this dissertation's research questions.
CHAPTER THREE
CRITICAL METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter constitutes an overview of the rhetorical methods and data which will be used to answer this study's research questions. Identification is first discussed in terms of its strategic use in constructing personal and corporate identity. Next, the use of metaphor as identification strategy is discussed. This chapter concludes with a conceptual and operational basis for employing a new critical term extending the concept of identification for the study of evangelical discourse.

Identification as Rhetorical Strategy

Burke's notion of identification has received considerable attention by scholars of rhetoric (Byker & Anderson; Cheney, 1983, 1985, 1991; Cheney and Tompkins, 1987; Day, 1960; Duncan, 1962; Foss et al., 1991; Gaines, 1979; 1991; Leff, 1973; Nichols, 1963; Oravec, 1989; Thompson, 1975). While identification has been understood to work at both conscious and unconscious levels, it is a conscious strategy on the part of rhetor to achieve a desired end, though one that may entail unintended consequences. Burke himself seemed relatively disinterested in mapping out the particular devices by which identification may be accomplished (Nichols, 1963). Consequently, the concept and application of
identification as rhetorical strategy vary according to the particular sub-field of interest, the nature of research questions, the artifact(s) under investigation, and even by the scholar's worldview.

Chapter One provided an overview of the relationship between rhetoric and the concept of identification. Chapter Two provided a conceptual basis for anticipating the kinds of interests, tensions, and areas of general concern related to the rhetoric of evangelical movement-organizations. In the spirit of the aforementioned scholarly treatments, and given this dissertation's conceptual grounding, I will point out various and strategic places in which identification occurs in the rhetoric of the Promise Keepers.

Strategies of identification have been implemented to negotiate the tension between unity and diversity among large, aggregate collectives, particularly in relation to the management of identity (Cheney, 1983, 1985, 1991). Drawing largely from Burke, Cheney and Tompkins (1987) argue that individual uniqueness is often expressed by one's "affiliation of identification with various organized groups" (p. 4). In this view, shared corporate identity becomes a function of shared interests. Put another way, personal identity is constructed, maintained, and transformed in relation to something other-than the
self. Indeed, "one's participation in a collective, social role cannot be obtained in any other way" (Burke, 1959, p. 266).

The other-than in question are the larger corporate "we's" with which we identify. For religious audiences these targets would include identification with one's church and its attendant beliefs, actions, and interests. Rhetoric is the means by which these targets become manifest. Moreover, our identities are often identified by demarcating terms such as employee, husband, father and Baptist. In this way, "the so-called 'I' is merely a unique combination of corporate we's" (Burke, 1959 p. 264).

Identities do not always work in harmony and may in fact conflict at crucial points. One may be a Christian and yet work for a company that subsidizes very un-Christian activities, or that requires him to engage in certain un-Christian behaviors. Conflicting identities can become problematic to the point that the dissonance created in the individual is no longer tolerable. In such cases, individuals may seek refuge (or salvation) by discarding one identity and adopting another. The psychoanalyst, says Burke, "cures" the patient of "faulty identification only insofar as he smuggles in an alternative identification" (Burke, 1959, p. 264).
Of course, the line between multiple and competing identities is not nearly so distinct as the discussion implies. Individuals may be unaware or simply choose to ignore points where identities conflict. It is here that rhetoric makes salient such divisive identities and offers an alternative or alternatives from which to choose. On the other hand, rhetoric is also capable of masking conflict or of providing a way of terminologically transcending it at different levels of abstraction.

Burke also notes that the obligations inherent in securing identities is never completely a two-way affair (Burke, 1959). That is, identification is never complete. There will always exist a space, potential or actual, in which conflicting interests, actions, beliefs will assert themselves within and across identities. And although Burke draws from the relationship between workers and owners to exemplify this exigence, we can extend this notion to include any type of corporate identification (including that which pertains to a religious body). Thus, as Burke notes, in the absence of complete two-way identification, people are left to shuffle among various identities in order to make sense of their experience.

If identity is both state and process, identification is the means by which people construct and negotiate their various identities. Identification, like identity, is fundamentally rooted in the use of language and directly
implies division. Identification is an essential process of any rhetoric which seeks to promote unity. The terms for unity can only be understood within the context of dis-unity. Thus identification works in both directions, postivity and negatively, to form substantial relationships between and among individuals. Given the democratic tension between individual autonomy and corporate unity, it is expected that Promise Keepers' rhetoric will employ various terms aimed at negotiating this tension in ways favorable to its purposes.

A second way of viewing identification as a method is through its association with metaphor. Evangelical discourse, at least since the time of the First Great Awakening, has frequently employed naturalistic metaphors as a means of transcending or explaining the realm of "the natural." Alternatively, evangelical discourse has also used metaphors in ways that bring the realm of the transcendent into a proper fit with nature. Eugene White (1972) has shown that the period leading up to and culminating in the Puritan Great Awakening brought discernible changes in the nature and function of evangelical rhetoric. Religious rhetors such as Solomon Stoddard, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards consciously breached the Aristotlian-Ciceronian rational
model of preaching in favor of a rhetoric which increasingly emphasized the primacy of emotion. Central to this emphasis was the infusion of metaphoric language.

The height of the Great Awakening was probably reached in the preaching of Jonathan Edwards. Following Stoddard's ideas, Edwards infused the traditional, orthodox skeletal structure (Text, Doctrine, Reasons, Application), with the language of sensory psychology. His rhetoric was imbued with vivid metaphors and horrific images, designed to foster the proper fear and humility in listeners. According to White, however, the key difference between Edwards -- along with the evangelical Calvinists who followed him -- and traditional Puritan thought is that Edwards changed the focus from divine truth to divine beauty. What followed was a widespread use of metaphors as a mode of identification capable of bringing auditors into the proper emotional state. Consequently, the emergent evangelical Calvinism fostered during the Great Awakening became committed to a new strain of emotional religion, marking a theretofore unprecedented turn in the rhetoric of religious movements.

Contemporary rhetorical scholarship has moved away from classical notions of metaphor as merely an expressive or ornamental stylistic device toward that which regards metaphor as a way of thinking (Ivie, 1982, 1987; Osborn and Ehninger, 1962; Richards, 1936). Burke (1935)
recognized the role of metaphor as both heuristic and epistemic. Metaphors create a way of viewing reality by bringing together different categories of association, thereby allowing for the recognition of previously unrevealed relationships. They are linguistic mechanisms for seeing something in terms of something else. That is, they create a "perspective by incongruity" (pp. 118-127).

Perspective, for Burke, refers to a point of view or general orientation for the interpretation of reality. Metaphors provide such perspectives by bringing together, through language, previously unrelated ideas. We can put this another way by simply observing that metaphors bring familiar ideas to unfamiliar epistemic contexts. For example, the characterization of the Internet as an "information superhighway" brings together ideas associated with data gathering and disseminating with those ideas associated with rapid and efficient spatial movement. In this way, a new perspective, a new way of understanding the Internet is given by recourse to previously unwed ideas and terminologies. It is clear, then, that metaphors can both modify existing perspectives and create entirely new ones.

Importantly, metaphors also serve to deflect alternative ways of viewing reality (Burke, 1935). The metaphor men are warriors works to deflect the perspective of men as sensitive or even feminine. In this way,
metaphors function as a kind of terministic screen, prescribing certain ways of understanding reality and consequently proscribing other ways. As Burke says: "[Much of what] we take as observations about 'reality' may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms" (1966, p.46).

The possibilities alluded to by Burke entail not only potential ways of viewing reality, but also for understanding human motive. For Burke, motives are linguistic explanations of, or justifications for, conduct based upon the accepted norms of a language group, and are thus assigned with reference to our orientation or perspective. Whereas metaphors provide perspective, motives are the product of that perspective. Thus, in any rhetoric whose perspective of revolves around the metaphor of the warrior-man, we might expect certain kinds of related motive terms to follow. The confluence of such metaphoric terms provides the heuristic method for locating the rhetorical resources of identification constitutive of religious motive, purpose, act. This dissertation will also seek to discover uses of metaphors in ways which attempt to induce audiences into a proper state of identification.
The Scriptural Implant

Recalling the evangelical tenet that invests considerable interest in scriptural authority, it is possible to see the Bible itself as a rich source of inventional material. Rhetorically considered, the Bible thus becomes a primary source for identification strategies linking spiritual truths and their God-given authority with human motive and purpose. More specifically, Promise Keepers' evangelical discourse can be expected to employ select biblical verses in an effort to induce audiences into a state of identification. The citing of scriptural verses in religious discourse in order to promote, defend, or oppose religious interests has received precious little conceptual and methodological attention in contemporary rhetorical scholarship.

Hill and Cheadle (1996) have explored this phenomenon as it occurred throughout American history. They found that religious leaders used the Bible both to uphold and to oppose the institution of slavery. Proponents of slavery used 1 Peter 2:21, Colossians 3:22, and Ephesians 6:5 in order to educate slaves on the perils of disobedience. Opponents of slavery found ample motive for disobedience in Exodus 9:13 (Let my people go), Mathew 7:12, and Galatians 3:28. The latter verse reads, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (NIV). Ironically,
the conversion of the "heathen" slaves had important
consequences for the way in which slavery was viewed. Once
a common identity as Christian had been forged, the rule
of Galatians was understood to nullify the "lower"
identities of slave and master. Consequently, the biblical
justification for slavery was, in effect, abolished.

Hill and Cheadle discovered numerous uses of biblical
Scripture to promote or condemn a variety of social,
political causes, including homosexuality, capital
punishment, public school prayer, suffrage, temperance,
and environmentalism. There is, thus, ample precedent for
conceptualizing the use of biblical Scripture as a
strategy of identification in ideological discourse. This
dissertation, therefore, means to provide a more
systematic treatment of this phenomenon from an explicitly
rhetorical perspective.

When instances of biblical Scripture are employed
verbatim in Promise Keepers' rhetoric, either in full text
or by reference to scriptural markers (i.e., 1 John 3:16),
I propose to name this identification strategy a
scriptural implant. Operationally, the scriptural implant
is the importing of strategically selected New and Old
Testament Scripture verses into narrative or argumentative
modes of discourse from among a choice of available
scriptural alternatives. An example of rhetoric from the Promise Keeper National TV Campaign (1997) tract is illustrative:

We also believe that all Christians are called to support their local church before supporting ministries like Promise Keepers. Therefore, we ask that you give to Promise Keepers only after you have fulfilled your biblical responsibility to your church.

Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace (2 Corinthians 1:12).

All contributions to Promise Keepers are income tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law....

The text's middle paragraph is a scriptural implant taken from the New Testament and used to make more attractive Promise Keepers' fund solicitation. The implant may be seen as operating on a number of levels of identification. In Chapter Six of this dissertation, I will address the various levels of identification on which scriptural implants may operate. At this point, the example above is merely meant to illustrate the term's operationalization in an external, that is nonscriptural, piece of discourse.

Conceptually, the critical term offers several useful points for consideration. Consistent with the metaphor of implant, this strategy is understood as an artificial
means of making a "body" of text more "attractive." Implants are smaller "parts" of discourse taken from an indigenous social, cultural, political, and religious context and grafted into an alien piece of discourse. Scriptural implants are, in this sense, decontextualized fragments capable of transforming the appearance of ideological discourse. In addition, the term is consistent with the postmodern conception of texts as fragmented; that is, composed of other "bodies" of discourse. Scripture is just another of those body parts and at least ostensibly a "healthier" body part.

This term has the added conceptual benefit of moving beyond traditional inductive and deductive treatments of the Bible found in homiletics. Unlike the Puritan sermons, for instance, contemporary evangelical texts do not generally start from a single biblical statement and work deductively toward some conclusion. Nor are evangelical texts a simple matter generalizing to a specific biblical conclusion. Scriptural implants rather work analogically. Their use grants an appearance of uniting or bringing into a state of unity otherwise disparate pieces of discourse and their attendant terms and ideas.

The metaphor is also suggestive of a kind of temporal symmetry between the linear progression of discourse and the movement of human thought. Just as in life, where evangelicals reflect upon biblical quotations from time to
time to sanction or reprove their thoughts and actions, so do scriptural implants mirror this process in evangelical discourse.

The rhetorical critic seeks to find places in the body of a text that has been repaired by implants. Inferences drawn from the use of scriptural implants might extend to the rhetor, the audience, and the organization employing them. It is possible that the rhetor, at least, felt that the discourse was somewhat weak or less than attractive at that textual moment, and so required an implant. Of particular interest for the rhetorical critic is the recognition that alternative Scriptures might be available which would contradict, or at least attenuate, the ideas of a particular piece of discourse. Indeed, there exist scriptural verses that specifically condemn the making of promises to God and man.

There are many additional questions that can be raised with regard to Promise Keepers' use of scriptural implants, including their specific location within the discourse, relative frequency of occurrence, and specific source location (Old vs. New Testaments, The Gospels vs. the Pauline letters). The answers to these and other questions should allow the rhetorical critic to make additional inferences about the rhetorical nature of Promise Keepers, as well as the character of contemporary evangelical discourse in general. To sum, this
dissertation's methodology uses the concept of identification as rhetorical strategy and accordingly, looks at metaphorical, scriptural implant, and other linguistic strategies of identification used to manage the exigencies of identity, recruitment, and opposition.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE EXIGENCE OF IDENTITY

Introduction

Any religious order which attempts to compete in the open marketplace that is the American religious infrastructure faces the crucial rhetorical task of constructing individual and corporate identity. The sheer volume of American religious orders means that any single order must successfully address the issue of "Who 'we' are," if it is to provide a viable target toward which individuals may direct their interests and allegiances. And without a distinctive identity, the target may well be mistaken for or confused with any number of competing religious orders which vie for similar interests and often through similar transcendent terminologies.

This chapter seeks to discover the strategies of identification employed by Promise Keepers in an effort to manage the exigence of identity. Among the exigencies that Promise Keepers must manage, identity is of central importance. Before individuals can be recruited into an order, they must have some idea of what it is they are being recruited into. And those who would raise their voices in opposition must have a relatively fixed idea of what or who it is to be opposed. In this sense, the
exigence of identity is logically prior to the exigencies of recruitment and opposition. It is to this exigence that I now turn.

Constructing Personal Identity

Promise Keepers is a relatively young religious order. Unlike Catholic or mainline Protestant orders, Promise Keepers does not possess a readily available institutionalized set of symbols through which religious identity is understood. Consequently, any rhetorical effort aimed at managing identity must concern itself with constructing identity from the ground up. This concern applies both to the identity of the individual follower, as well as to that of the order as a whole.

In building a distinctive religious identity, one may look to the kinds of terms that are employed toward this purpose. As Burke suggests, the act of naming or labeling is an important first step toward the construction of personal identity. The act of naming itself sets the thing named apart from other entities not so named. In this, one can maintain that one is a Promise Keeper and thereby set apart from other identities, including religious ones, not so named.

While there are a number of references to the term Promise Keeper, the most salient resource for the term's meaning is found in a body of prescriptive principles
collectively known as the *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper* (Phillips, 1994). Below is the entire body of prescriptions pro-offered by Promise Keepers:

1. A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.

3. A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical and sexual purity.

4. A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection and Biblical values.

5. A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the mission of the Church by honoring and praying for his pastor, and by actively giving his time and resources.

6. A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of Biblical unity.

7. A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

The prescriptions above represent the most explicit codification of what it means to be a Promise Keeper at the individual level. In terms of form, there are seven, hierarchically arranged prescriptions. The choice to delineate seven prescriptions -- as opposed to some other number -- may be understood as an identification strategy by which the numerological significance of the number seven comes to be associated with the religious identity.
of the Promise Keeper. The number seven appears many times in Christian Scripture. In Revelation, for instance, one reads of the "seven churches of Christ," the "seven seals" by which important knowledge of the end times was kept hidden, "seven trumpets," "seven thunders," "seven angels" and "seven golden bowls." The Book of Joshua records that a select group of Jews marched around the city seven times in order to bring about God's plan and victory for his people. And in Genesis, it is written that the creation of the world was accomplished in seven days.

These are several of the more prominent places in which religious identity and authority are associated with the number seven. The examples are suggestive of the attempt to identify Promise Keepers with God's plan for his followers, as well as the God-given authority to carry out a program for social change. As these examples suggest, the symbol is associated, not only with religious identity, but with highly pro-active behaviors which are authorized according to that identity.

Some Christian scholars point out that the number seven represents perfection, or in some cases, completion. Theological speculations regarding the ultimate truth or significance of the number's meaning aside, it should be recognized that the symbol itself functions as a source of religious authority for believers. However arbitrary the demarcating of seven prescriptions may seem to the
religious outsider, its rhetorical significance is seen in
the act of identification by which the authority and
purpose of God vis a vis the numeric symbol comes to be
associated with the authority and purpose of the Promise
Keeper.

A second formal feature of the prescriptions is found
in the consistent repetition of the term, "A Promise
Keeper is committed to." This feature suggests a
systematic and somewhat legal-like orientation toward
religious identity. The form attempts to place the
prescriptions within a kind of contractual or covenantal
framework, not at all unlike the kinds of quasi-legal
formulations found in the prescriptions for identity in
the Old Testament. The Ten Commandments, for instance,
follow a similar formal pattern in their delineation of
the thou shalts and thou shalt nots.

The notion of a covenant-type identity is furthered
by the claims of Promise Keepers' representatives who
explicitly assert that the identity of a Promise Keeper is
established through covenant relationships with other
Promise Keepers (McCartney, 1992) This, then is another
strategy of identification which associates the
contractual form in which the prescriptions are rendered
with the kind of identity that Promise Keepers intends to
establish for its subscribers.
Yet another formal feature of the prescriptions concerns their hierarchal presentation. The sequential numbering suggests a correlation between the rank order of each prescription and its prescriptive content. For instance, the content of prescription one may be understood to carry greater prescriptive significance than the content of prescription two. Similarly, the content of prescription two carries greater significance than prescriptions three through seven.

The implications of this point will become clearer when I examine the content of the prescriptions. For now, however, it will be enough point out that the hierarchal arrangement of prescriptions is correlative with the relative importance of the interests which cumulatively form the parameters of the Promise Keeper identity. Finally, it should be noted that the form organizes, prioritizes, and ultimately reduces a prodigious amount of ideological material, which has filled volumes of theological literature and occupied centuries worth of sermons, into a relatively manageable and quickly articulable set of prescriptions.

David Wells (1993) has argued that the corporate values of competition, efficiency, and productivity have overtaken the theological value of rational, philosophical reflection in the forming of contemporary religious identity. The paradigm shift is evidenced, for instance,
in the use of terms such as facilitator -- a term which is used in Promise Keepers' literature -- in the place of leader. These terms, imported into religious contexts, have lead to a reconceptualizing of religious existence within a multiple-role metaphor, one which recognizes the ever-increasing complexity of social existence and the need to renegotiate continually the parameters of that existence, in what formerly, and at least ostensibly, had been a relatively fixed, and universally endorsed set of religious values. In the prescriptive form, then, there is a subtle point of identification in which Promise Keepers out-competes other orders, both secular and religious, in constructing an identity capable of managing a wide variety of interests and obligations with maximum efficiency.

With these formal features in mind, I turn to an examination of the content of the prescriptions. The first prescription provides for a strictly religious demarcation of identity. The term Jesus Christ is perhaps the singularly most exclusive religious term in the entire body of prescriptions. It locates identity within an expressly religious, and more specifically Christian context. Identities constructed around other religious terms, including Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, etc. are thereby excluded.
Beyond these basic religious divisions, however, the religious language is framed broadly enough to encompass a variety of Christian and neo-Christian belief orientations. For instance, Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as the more mainstream Christian belief orientations, would find little in the content of the prescriptions that would exclude them from participating. As well, it is quite possible to subscribe to this prescription without ever broaching the divisive theological issues of original sin, scriptural authenticity, biblical inerrancy, salvation, and predestination. Indeed, it is this very broad orientation to religious identity that has been the focus of much criticism within some sectors of the Christian community -- an issue which I shall consider more comprehensively in Chapter Six.

The second prescription, is noteworthy for several reasons. First, the terms men and brothers provide the first material point of reference for the Promise Keeper's identity. A Promise Keeper is a male. Females are thereby excluded from direct participation in this identity, a point which has important consequences with respect to gender-based notions of identity and authority. As Cheney's (1991) analysis of the U.S. Catholic Bishops showed, religious identity bestows moral authority. Insofar as the identity of the Promise Keeper is
concerned, this means that the male is placed in and entrusted with the crucial authoritative role germane to this identity: the making and keeping of moral prescriptions (or promises). More precisely, males are granted a "God-given" and final authority to make promises, prescribe the content of those promises, and implement those promises.

This authority also extends, often implicitly, to those promises which, once made, can be reasonably kept, and those which can be reasonably broken in cases where a conflict of interests arises between or among them. While the exact manner in which promises are actually manifested may be subject to negotiation, the final authority would seem to be a function of gender. That is, it is to the male that Promise Keepers extends the authority to frame the conditions under which promises are made, kept, and broken. What is rarely, if ever, subject to negotiation is promise making and keeping as a motivating principle.

The second prescription also ushers in the existence of a small community of males for the purpose of developing the Promise Keeper identity. Given its place in the hierarchy of prescriptions, it is to be expected that this community is considered vital to one's identity as a Promise Keeper. And indeed, this prescription has been manifested in thousands of small group communities whose creation and maintenance has received the lion's share of
Promise Keepers' rhetorical efforts. I shall examine more fully the small group phenomenon shortly. For now, it should be noted that this prescription and its attendant rhetoric has resulted in the formation of a discrete rhetorical situation in which much of the crucial work of constructing the Promise Keeper identity takes place.

A survey of the latter prescriptions reveals an ambitious attempt to cover a range of socio-religious beliefs and behaviors. Prescription three presents a relatively abstract treatment of moral, ethical, and sexual identity. Prescriptions four through six target marital, familial, church, religious, and denominational identities. Consequently, the subscriber is left with what would seem to be a cumbersome array of contractual obligations. There is a kind of rhetorical paradox at work here. On the one hand, the prescriptions problematize the most important areas of personal identity. There is enough fodder for consideration to call into question even the most well-adjusted individual. On the other hand, the prescriptions allow for the "promise of success" where even one of the prescriptions is fulfilled in the understanding that the future will provide opportunity for additional growth.

Promise seven provides the first clear indication of a scriptural implant, here conceived as a strategy of identification. By this strategy the attempt is made to
give this prescription greater rhetorical force, as though the prescription would somehow have been less compelling or attractive without it. As well, the strategy attempts to bring the individual into a state of identification in which the authority granted the biblical text is transferred to the identity of the Promise Keeper, in this case the authority to (re)produce other Promise Keepers.

In view of Burke's suggestions regarding ultimate terms, it will be useful to examine the ultimate terms by which the meaning of the Promise Keeper identity is conveyed. These terms, which appear in each of the seven prescriptions, are promise and keeper. In the Promise Keepers promotional tape entitled What is a Promise Keeper? (1993), Dallas Theological Seminary president Charles Swindall boldly proclaims, "This is called Promise Keepers, not just Promise Makers," and adds, "It is impossible for us to overestimate the impact that a promise can make on us and those to whom we make our promises." It would seem to follow that it might also be dangerous to underestimate the impact or consequences of failing to keep one's promises.

Given the rather comprehensive nature of the prescriptions that one is asked to keep, one wonders how the Promise Keeper identity can be maintained when inevitable breaking of promises occurs. There is an inherent logical tension created by the very term Promise
Keeper in that it presupposes an ongoing condition of promise breaking. Otherwise, there would be no need to continually affirm one's identity as a keeper of promises. This tension is built into the very identity of the promise keeper and suggests a kind of irresolvable tension that is self-empowering. Alternatively, it is possible that the Promise Keeper identity is one which leads to a perpetual state of denial, as each successive failure to keep the promises further threatens the well-being of that identity.

This problem is partially addressed by the word commitment which follows each prescription. The suggestion is that the identity of a promise keeper is not one of a (perfected) state, but rather one of process. A Promise Keeper is one who is committed to keeping promises. Promise Keepers' president, Randy Phillips, explains that it is "vitally important to see that becoming a Promise Keeper is a process" (Phillips, audio tape, 1995). The meaning of the term Promise Keeper is thus centered on a process of becoming rather than being.

This feature of identity as process also provides an ironic mechanism for justifying or perpetuating the very problem it is supposed to curtail. A Promise Keeper is one who is becoming better at making and keeping promises. Failure at either point can be dismissed as an identity whose hierarchal mode of perfection lies in the continued
willingness to remain in process. A perfected state can never be realized, nor should it be expected to, since that would complete a process whose very identity is continually in transition.

This aspect of identity also carries interesting implications with regard to the evangelical notion of sin. What the Bible refers to as sinners and their correlative state of sin, Promise Keepers replaces with the relatively noble terms Promise Keepers and the correlative process of commitment. This subtle shift tends to mitigate the notion that humans can never achieve a perfected state. As a Promise Keeper, one is not necessarily expected to do so. In giving evangelicals a new name and new identity, Promise Keepers recontextualizes the nature of sin and its relation to the identity of the sinner.

Managing Multiple Identities

Promise Keepers produces a considerable amount of literature whose content is expressly designed to negotiate the conflicting interests germane to different identities. Its most popular work toward this end is entitled The Power of a Promise Kept (Lewis, 1995). The text is a compendium of "real life" stories of individuals who become Promise Keepers and who have been inspired to commit heroic deeds consistent with this identity.
The text's mode of communication is primarily narrative. The stories are dramatic representations of the principle of transcendence. Each story weaves through a complex of events and characters and progresses to one or more crises culminating in a life-changing event in which one's "old" identity is transcended, and a new identity is born -- that of a Promise Keeper. There is little that is demanded from the reader of the text in the way of genuine theological reflection. Rather, the stories invite relatively low-order cognitive thought and relatively high-order emotional involvement.

The choice to use a narrative mode of discourse may be seen as a strategy of identification designed to promote unity among small group members. An examination of the content of the stories reveals that strategic points of identification are narratively cast along the social identities of gender, occupation, marital status, and religious background, and to a lesser degree, race and age. The stories vary with respect to the emphasis placed on each of these identities, but all of them are treated in some measure.

In addition, each social identity is cast within a range of possible properties and outcomes. In the first story, noteworthy because of its appearance in the sequence of stories, we encounter Jeff Vaughn, a white male, twice married, who works in a very demanding upper
management position. The character's religious status at the outset is described as "backslidden," "carnal," and "Christian" (Lewis, 1995, pp. 7-8). The second story involves a black male, once married, who works in a supervisory capacity in the military, and is portrayed as a man of longstanding Christian integrity. The rest of the stories present men, predominantly white, married once or twice over, are relatively ambitious, working in a range of occupations, and whose religious background ranges from a "life-time [of] Christian service" (p. 29) to an ambivalent attitude toward religion in general. In this way, the stories allow for a range of social points of identification whose strategy is typically referred to as one of common ground.

Many of the stories progress through a series of dramatic episodes in which competing identities are thrown into conflict. Consider the cases of Joel Treadway and Warren Risniak. Treadway, a successful trial lawyer, faces the specter of a bankrupt marriage caused by excessive workaholism. Risniak, a sales and marketing manager for a computer software firm, is buckling under the tension created by the conflicting demands of his occupation and his family. In a spate of melioristic bravado, Warren attempts to solve the mounting crisis by leaving work a couple of hours early and installing a fax machine in his
home. His coworkers are upset because he is leaving well before they do, and his wife complains that the home is just another place to work.

In this way, conflict arises out of the competing interests germane to different identities. As Burke has noted, this kind of strategy provides the necessary requisite for a rhetoric that arises as a communicative, cooperative response. It provides the means of transcending, even of smuggling in a new higher level identity which transcends the divisions of the lower.

The tension created in these dramas presents an interesting paradox. On the one hand, the pitting of interests germane to occupational and familial identities becomes a source of guilt; but on the other hand, it is this guilt which provides the ultimate motive for identity transformation. It is also this guilt which provides the condition requisite to construct and sustain the Promise Keeper identity, an identity which is itself in perpetual tension. Put another way, the Promise Keeper identity is located within in a dramatic tension played out in an endless guilt-redemption cycle.

This tension, negotiated at the lower or lay levels of the Promise Keepers' hierarchy, also finds a similar, though correspondingly more significant instantiation, at the order's highest levels. Promise Keepers' founder, Bill
McCartney, is a case in point. McCartney (1995) speaks candidly of his own sense of failure and the resulting experience of guilt:

I am not afraid to say that I have had a struggle with alcohol, that I have had a long battle to control my temper, that I have agonized over things that have been said and written about my family and me, that I have second-guessed myself on every level of my life, that I wonder whether I am worthy, and that I have endured feelings of guilt (p.xv).

Ultimately, it was this feeling of guilt which provided the impetus for McCartney's decision to leave a lucrative coaching position at the peak of his career. In a move which caught nearly everyone by surprise, McCartney claimed that his departure was due to his need to spend more time with his wife and family (McCartney, 1995). Ironically, however, McCartney found his time increasingly occupied by his duties as Promise Keepers' chief visionary. As a result, his wife began a gradual descent into a state of depression in which she became, in her own words, a "wounded, ugly woman...totally and completely withdrawn" (McCartney, 1995, p. 291). Consistent with our notion of perpetual tension, however, it is not surprising that McCartney would have yet another opportunity at redemption in choosing to take seriously his identity as Promise Keeper (McCartney, 1995).

In McCartney's example there is an implicit, hierarchical principle which helps to promote a distinct sense of identity and authority between leaders and
followers in the Promise Keepers' order. That is, leaders and followers are so identified according to the relative degree of perceived sacrifice to the order's ultimate identity. The best or ideal Promise Keepers are those whose sacrifice appears to be the most dramatic. By this principle, repeatedly dramatized in Promise Keepers' rhetoric, identity is managed at different tiers of the order.

There is a vicious paradox at work here. Perceptions of dramatic sacrifice are commensurate with one's pre-sacrificial position in society. Rising to higher societal levels, however, generally requires the very kind of ambition or "workaholism" that Promise Keepers' rhetoric so emphatically attempts to undermine. Moreover, since Promise Keepers has defined identity in terms of process, the sacrificial principle must be continually played out, thus requiring a return to those areas where identities may once again be thrown into conflict, leading to repeated, and perhaps even greater, sacrifices.

Seen from this view, the small groups and stadium events, are merely hierarchical presentations of the sacrificial principle. Small groups allow men to discuss the terms and conditions by which sacrifices are understood and undertaken. They are the rhetorical platforms whereby individuals can display their identities as Promise Keepers within a hierarchy of similarly-
inclined individuals. This strategy of identification whereby men become consubstantial on the principle of sacrifice is an important means by which Promise Keepers manages identity at differential tiers of its hierarchy.

The vicious aspect of this rhetorical dynamic concerns the circularity involved in the creation and expurgation of guilt. Simply put, the individual who strives to become a Promise Keeper will, at some point, be led to feel guilty for not working hard enough to get to the point where he should feel guilty for working so hard. In practical terms, of course, only a select few can afford to leave their professional vocations in order to work in ministerial capacities which would allow them to expurgate their guilt by convincing others of the need to redeem themselves for the failures that they themselves could or cannot overcome. Yet, this is precisely how Promise Keepers cultivates the motive to assume a new religious identity.

At this point, it is clear that Promise Keepers manages identity by pitting various social identities (work, family) against one another. Strategies of identification are evident in Promise Keepers' appropriation of secular symbols of identity and authority such as one's occupational status, marital status and social status. At the level of social identity, conflict is encountered among competing identities, which results
in a sense of personal guilt. To overcome this conflict, a new identity, that of a Promise Keeper, is assumed by which this conflict can be successfully overcome. Individuals are thereby induced to believe that they may lay claim to an identity which empowers them to do things other identities can't or won't do.

But Promise Keepers rhetoric aims at more than just social identity management. It also targets religious identity. Individuals represented in Promise Keepers' rhetoric often subscribe to some religious identity, whether Baptist, Protestant, or Catholic. Given the transcendent power of these religious identities, it must be wondered how Promise Keepers negotiates the tension between its and other religious identities. As I have shown, part of this lies in the relatively vague moral prescriptions offered in the Seven Promises. An additional rhetorical resource toward managing religious identity, however, is seen in the association of religious identity with masculinity per se, a notion largely absent in other religious identities, and one which secularly-based metaphors serve strategic identification ends.

To be fair, Promise Keepers does acknowledge the legitimacy of other religious identities, particularly those informed by a salvation experience. The message which continually traverses throughout Promise Keepers' rhetoric, however, is that one's identity as a Baptist or
even a Christian really isn't enough to cope with the problems of contemporary culture. The demands of postmodern life, with its considerable fragmentation and alienation, provide too much of a burden for even the well-meaning Christian, and more particularly Christian male, to overcome.

All but two of the stories in the Power of a Promise Kept, for instance, resolve pivotal points of conflict by having the protagonist attend a Promise Keepers' stadium event. After the experience, a significant transformation occurs. Roles once inadequately filled are now competently executed. These men, now Promise Keepers, are transformed into remarkably capable husbands and fathers, possessed of a newfound power to manage their affairs.

The implication is that their former religious identities somehow lacked the necessary equipment for living. The missing equipment is provided by an aspect of the Promise Keeper identity whose rhetorical means are found in metaphoric strategies of identification. Moreover, it is through such strategies that Promise Keepers manages the tension between individual autonomy and corporate unity.

Metaphoric language is pervasive in Promise Keepers' rhetoric. Most frequently, sports metaphors are employed to negotiate the relationship between personal and corporate identity. The principle of negativity often
functions within these metaphors as a means of establishing individual and corporate identity. Promise Keepers is not a "part-time" but rather "full-time players" who are "ready to show up and play everyday" (Phillips, 1996, p.1). While the context for rhetorical action is understood as that of a "game," it is not a game played for one's own glory, but rather for the glory of the team -- indeed for "God's team" (McCartney, 1992, p. 12).

In this view, the Promise Keeper is a spiritual athlete. The metaphor of the spiritual athlete has particular relevance for framing an identity which is explicitly masculine. Promise Keepers are men, many of whom are approaching middle-age and thus probably find a certain, perhaps romantic, appeal in this athletic identification. Nor is the lack of physical prowess a barrier to identification. The metaphor emphasizes that the contest is not won or lost on physical strength, but rather by the sheer act of human will, or alternatively, a sheer willingness to act.

This metaphor further serves to heighten the identification between the individual and Promise Keepers' vision, as well as the sense of comraderie among fellow believers in that vision. As with real athletic teams, differences in race, economic and social status, and even in religious affiliation, may be viewed as largely
irrelevant to the team's overall objectives. Indeed, athletic teams are often made more competitive because of such diversity.

Implicit in this aspect of the Promise Keeper identity is the notion of competition. The appeal to one's athleticism is an appeal to one's competitive instincts. It is a notion which Promise Keepers uses to distinguish its identity from other religious ones. It is also a motive which must be carefully managed if internal division or strife is to be mitigated. For there lurks within this motive the possibility of succumbing to temptation to compete merely for competition's sake.

Promise Keepers manages this aspect of identity by identifying an array of external competitive targets while emphasizing the cooperative nature of the team. External targets range from the fairly specific social ills of marital infidelity and drug abuse to the relatively vague notion of "the adversary" (McCartney, 1992, p.13). The point to be taken here is that there are a variety of targets, adapted to a variety of life circumstances, any one of which may serve as the foe of the week. In this way, the Promise Keeper identity continues to renew itself in the mode of process. In victory or defeat, there is always another enemy against which to compete.
A second way Promise Keepers manages the problem of competition is through the dramatic telling of real life stories of individual Promise Keepers through published literature and web site testimonials. Isolating individual achievement plays an important role in athletic team rhetoric. Here, individuals are singled out for glory in proportion to their contribution to the team. Individual glory, while important, is always subservient to team glory. Individual victory is a victory for the team. In this way individuality and diversity are elevated in ways that universalize the guilt-redemption experience, an experience which is readily transferred to the quest for corporate unity.

The identity of the spiritual athlete receives perhaps its most hierarchically-telling manifestation in the Promise Keepers' stadium event. In these events there is no apparent hierarchical stratification among audiences. Everyone is equal under the term Promise Keeper. Individuals are addressed as equals; they worship, pray, and play together as equals.

On the other hand, featured speakers in their role as leaders or "coaches" provide an implicit sense of hierarchy separating leaders from followers. And in these venues, McCartney himself, generally referred to as "Coach Mac," provides a final and authoritative hierarchical point identification for these spiritual athletes.
McCartney is, after all, a national championship winning coach. Indeed, from this point of view, McCartney never left coaching; he merely changed his venue.

In further extending this metaphor, it is easy to understand the allure it has for men. Previous failures may be understood as "losing seasons." A new game plan is clearly required, and one which is decidedly "offensive" in nature. Indeed, Promise Keepers' rhetoric can be understood as a plan of attack which stresses (offensive) action rather than (defensive) reflection. This offensively-minded approach to religious identity explains the curious unwillingness on the part of Promise Keepers' leaders to defend their theology. Criticized for its apparently vague or equivocal positions on matters of doctrine, Promise Keepers' president, Randy Phillips, responded by saying, "I think you're dealing with a whole area that is not our expertise or calling" (cited in Dager, 1995, p. 15). In terms of the athletic metaphor this may be translated as: "It's not the job of the offense to do defense."

This aspect of the Promise Keeper identity carries an important implication for traditional, evangelical conceptions of religious power and authority. Orthodox notions of "the devil," for instance, generally portray this entity as inordinately powerful, both willing to and capable of wreaking no uncertain devastation in the lives
of believers. The competitive motive which underlies the spiritual athlete tends to mitigate the conceptual force given the devil, even as the focus on team unity provides the numbers necessary for ultimate victory. This is another way in which the Promise Keepers induces subscribers into believing, however unconsciously, that its religious identity is empowered to do things other identities can't or won't do. In the process, Promise Keepers successfully threads the needle between appearing too institutional or authoritarian, while yet appropriating enough symbolic force to establish itself as an authoritative religious identity.

Summary

This chapter has explored the rhetorical means by which Promise Keepers has managed the exigence of identity. Critical to this management was the use of an ultimate symbol capable of bringing hierarchical order to an otherwise fragmented set of multiple and competing identities. As expected, Promise Keepers employed various strategies of identification, in form and content, in an effort to construct a new religious identity. Importantly, this process involved defining identity in terms of process rather than state. Identity is induced through a process whose rhetorical means include the use of bipolar motives of guilt-redemption and competition-cooperation. Through these means Promise Keepers successfully
negotiates the tension between individual autonomy and corporate unity. In the wake, an functional identity is created which empowers subscribers to believe they are possessed of new found abilities to do things other identities can't or won't do.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE EXIGENCE OF RECRUITMENT
Introduction

This chapter examines the exigence of initial and ongoing recruitment to the Promise Keepers. Scholarly analyses clearly indicate that the exigence of recruitment constitutes an important explanatory component in accounting for the success (or lack thereof) of social movements (Gerlach and Hine, 1967; Stewart et al., 1994), and by extension, populist religious movements. In Chapter Three, I argued that the exigence of identity is both theoretically distinct from, and in some sense, logically prior to the exigence of recruitment. While it is important to distinguish the exigencies of identity and recruitment for purposes of analysis, this chapter will show that, in practice, both exist in codependent relationship, one which necessarily entails compatible and contradictory interests which give rise to uniquely rhetorical considerations and solutions.

I will first examine Promise Keepers' early recruitment efforts to discover whether the claim that pre-existing relationships are central to a movement's recruiting success can be substantiated in this particular case. Second, I will discuss the role that Promise Keepers' co-founder Bill McCartney's prior public persona played in Promise Keepers' early recruitment efforts.
Third, drawing upon historically-grounded notions of what I shall call the public spectacle, I will discuss the role that the stadium event played in Promise Keepers' early, and by implication, later recruiting efforts. Fourth, I will examine Promise Keepers' construction of two rhetorical situations, the two-day conference and the men's small group for their recruiting function and note the efforts of Promise Keepers at professionalizing its recruitment efforts to these groups. Finally, and throughout this chapter, I will point out significant episodes which clearly illustrate the kinds of rhetorical strategies available to negotiate the often conflicting interests germane to the exigencies of identity and recruitment.

The Evangelical Network

As previously indicated, the vision for the Promise Keepers was initially expressed in 1990 by co-founders Bill McCartney and Dave Wardell. The vision actually entailed two distinct dimensions. The first dimension, expressed by McCartney, involved the filling of entire stadiums with men for the purpose of honoring the person of Jesus Christ (McCartney, 1995). The second dimension, articulated by Dave Wardell, involved the active and ongoing discipling of these men (McCartney, 1995). It will
be important to keep this distinction in mind, as each
dimension entailed distinct challenges related to
recruitment.

At the time of vision, Dave Wardell was the State
Director of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and an
Assistant Professor of sports psychology at Colorado
University. McCartney was the head football Coach at the
University of Colorado. Three months previously, his team
had won a share of the NCAA Division I national
championship. Both men, but McCartney in particular,
determined to communicate their vision to other men in the
local Boulder area in the hopes of winning support for the
vision. Soon thereafter, Wardell brought in Chuck Lane,
staff member of Campus Crusade for Christ. Lane, in turn,
brought in evangelical friend, Dan Shaeffer. These four
men constituted the core leadership circle of Promise
Keepers.

It is worth noting that as these initial recruitment
efforts were transpiring, McCartney began to suggest names
(or labels) for the small gathering of men. In a telephone
interview conducted with Dave Wardell on August 28, 1997,
Wardell indicated that the offerings included names such
as "Coaches Club," and "Real Men." Although the labels
were short-lived -- indeed, they changed from week to week
-- the process reveals that, in practical terms, the
vision was very much in a state of rhetorical
construction, even as its promoters struggled to find a viable corporate identity amidst the challenge to win adherents.

Subsequent to periodic prayer and strategy-forming meetings held among the four, the group began winning new recruits, quite literally a member at a time. Convinced of its value, each man made it a point to communicate the vision among his own circle of friends, many of whom were evangelical in religious orientation, and influential in their local, social, and religious communities. By the summer of 1990, a semi-formal gathering was held which attracted seventy-two men (McCartney, 1995). Although the attendance figure fell short of expectations, the gathering apparently generated enough enthusiasm for McCartney to rent Boulder's Coors Event Center for the following summer. As McCartney (1995) tells it, "Each time we met, every time we talked by telephone, we had a very real sense that the idea was not merely catching on, but exploding" (p. 286).

These early recruitment efforts suggest that the movement-organization did, in fact, grow along the very lines of pre-existing relationships indicated by Gerlach and Hine, though not always and necessarily within face-to-face settings. In addition, the process set a precedent which, as will be discussed later, provided the pattern for Promise Keepers' rhetorical efforts aimed at
recruitment for many years to follow. In the summer of 1991, the group held its first official meeting at the Coors Event Center. In practical terms, word of mouth recruiting efforts from a growing cadre of committed individuals, coupled with McCartney's personal efforts at persuading area pastors to get their constituencies involved probably, accounted for much of the 4,200 Coloradan men who were in attendance that day. Yet, there is, I believe, an additional and very important aspect of these early recruiting efforts which directly relates McCartney's public persona with the private desires of local evangelical audiences.

In Chapter Three, I argued that McCartney's personal character and coaching philosophy is reflected in the (metaphoric) character of Promise Keepers' rhetoric. But it was McCartney's prior public persona, both as revered football coach and outspoken evangelical that contributed a great deal to the Promise Keepers' initial recruiting efforts. In order to understand the relationship between McCartney's persona and early attraction to the Promise Keepers, a brief account of the socio-cultural context in which McCartney's persona was developed and sustained must be given.

The Persona of Bill McCartney

Nestled in the foothills of the picturesque Rocky Mountains, the city of Boulder is widely reputed for its
cultural diversity and breathtaking landscape. The city is studded with numerous exhibits, galleries, coffee houses, cafes, bistroes, and bed-and-breakfast accommodations. It even has a small brewery. Boulder is within easy striking distance of some of the U.S.'s most scenically alluring topography, not the least of which are its renowned hiking trails and ski slopes (Boulder Convention and Visitors Bureau, 1997). As one commentator put it, "Boulder has the look and feel of a European community, seemingly far removed from society's problems" (Teitcher, 1992, p. c-1).

Demographic data indicate that the community's inhabitants are relatively young, racially heterogenous, and affluent. The median age is 29, with nearly two thirds (63.3%) falling between 18-44 years of age (Boulder Chamber of Commerce, 1997). The vast majority (90%) of Boulder's residents are white (Boulder Chamber of Commerce, 1997). The median Effective Buying Income (EBI) hovers around $30,000. Nearly one third (31.3%) of these residents have an EBI of $50,000 or more (Boulder Chamber of Commerce, 1997). Importantly, one third of Boulder's inhabitants are students who attend the state's premiere institution of higher education. Taken together, it is understandable that Boulder should garner the reputation it has as a progressive, liberal community.
Within an hour's drive of Boulder, however, reside some of evangelicalism's most powerful ministries and parachurch organizations. James Dobson's Focus on the Family Ministry, The International Bible Society, Compassion International, and Young Life all have central headquarters located within an hour of the city. In addition, Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth with a Mission, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, among a dozen other evangelical organizations, have active chapters on Colorado University's campus.

Of course, the campus also houses dozens of organizations dedicated to promoting a divergent range of progressive socio-political interests as well. Among the groups found in The University of Colorado Club Guide (1991-1992) are:

- American Movement Israel
- Asian Pacific American Coalition
- Campus Women's Organization
- Committee in Solidarity with the people of El Salvador
- CU World Citizens
- CU Model United Nations
- Feminist Alliance
- Free South Africa Committee
- Lesbian/Bisexual/Gay/Community Alliance
- Students for Sane Nuclear Policy
- Mercy Force Initiative
- Social Issues Forum
- Students for Reproductive Freedom

The community of Boulder, together with the larger metropolitan area of which it is loosely a part, thus represents a curious synthesis of liberal and conservative
elements. It is this characterization which further grants Boulder a reputation for tolerance (Teitcher, 1992).

However, in a community whose identity is grounded in such a wellspring of divergent interests and ideas, there are bound to be undercurrents of potential volatility, however tolerant its image may appear. As one local pastor put it, "The people of this city are tolerant so long as you agree with their viewpoint" (Ryle, cited in Teicher, 1992, p. C-1).

As is often the case with smaller communities which contain relatively large universities, Boulder's identity is in no small part associated with that of its university. Extending Burke's notion of corporate identity to the present sociocultural context, one might simply say that the well being of Boulder is directly related to the prestige of its university. In our contemporary era, one of the more readily available sources for promoting a university's prestige is through its athletic programs. Owing in large part to the sheer visibility afforded by the media -- to say nothing of the economic dividends -- it is fair to say that college football has, for some time, dominated the field as the singularly most prestigious college athletic sport.

"Prestigious" was not a term which would even remotely characterize Colorado's football program in 1982. The teams had suffered through a decade of mediocre
performances, punctuated by three seasons successive losing seasons -- a total of seven victories -- leading up to the 1982 season (McCartney, 1995). Head coach Chuck Fairbank's untimely defection to the World Football League left the University scrambling to find a replacement for the upcoming season. With a limited applicant pool, and at the behest of the highly regarded Michigan coach, Bo Schembechler, the University offered the position to the relatively unknown Bill McCartney (McCartney, 1995).

The community of Boulder greeted McCartney's arrival with a fair amount of enthusiasm (McCartney, 1995). That enthusiasm began to wane in 1984, however, after McCartney's teams amassed a three-year cumulative won-loss record identical to the three years immediately preceding his arrival (McCartney, 1995). McCartney's supporters were quick to point out that the coach had been singularly responsible for improving the visibility and integrity of the program within the state of Colorado. Player drop-out rates were down, and player graduation rates were up. On the other hand, some local writers, initially circumspect with their criticisms, now openly questioned the priorities of a coach whose recruits were more notable for their religious character than for their athletic talent (McCartney, 1995). All parties agreed, however, McCartney
included, that the team's on-field performance was a high priority, and that recruitment was central to this priority (McCartney, 1995).

It was clear, then, from very early on in his tenure at Colorado, that McCartney was an able, if unwilling, target for a particular kind of criticism whose rhetorical dimensions were beginning to form around the tension between private religious conviction and professional public performance. McCartney felt the tension deeply. In his 1995 autobiography, he makes no secret of his desire to win the respect of both his peers and the community of Boulder, nor of his belief that such respect would follow from his success as a coach, as measured in terms of his team's on-field performance. But McCartney also desired to remain faithful to his religious beliefs. It was a pivotal time for McCartney, and one which would serve future notice of how the interests germane to his identities as religious believer and professional college coach would be rhetorically managed within the exigence of recruitment.

Following a dismal season in 1984, during which time his team went 1-10, McCartney began focusing an increasing amount of recruiting effort on athletic talent of national caliber (McCartney, 1995). In this regard, McCartney faced an important constraint in which appeals to a long-standing tradition of excellence -- an appeal McCartney had the luxury of using at the University of Michigan --
was unavailable to him at Colorado. Consequently, he was forced to find alternative means to attract recruits. The alternative he chose represented, in his own words, "a whole new perspective" on the business of recruiting (p. 192):

Colorado is a beautiful setting. The state, the community, the university, all beautiful. Yes, there's the reputation of being a 'party school,' but that's not so bad. There are lots of parties there. Lots of things to do. Lots going on. A fun place to play football and go to school. I sold those things: a fresh start, a revitalization. And I told these youngsters they could be a factor in turning the program around; in bringing it to another (McCartney, 1995, pp. 192-193).

In essence McCartney's appeal was two-fold. First he appealed to the cultural allure of the community of Boulder itself. Particularly interesting is McCartney's insistence that the school's ostensibly negative "party" image was something to be celebrated. The implication is that his recruits could expect to receive a certain level of tolerance, perhaps even support, from their Christian coach, concerning their extra-curricular activities. In this way, McCartney sought to balance the significance of his religious beliefs with the necessity of recruiting athletic talent. And although McCartney admits the strategy at times left him feeling like "one of those cultists or a brush salesman" (McCartney, 1995, p.193), it was a compromise he was evidently willing to accept.
The second appeal is a rhetorical compliment to the aforementioned constraint. Where a foundation does not yet exist, it must be built. If McCartney’s recruits were not to be the heirs of an established tradition of excellence, then they would be its benefactors.

It is interesting to compare this recruiting strategy with that used in some of the early (and even later) Promise Keepers’ rhetoric. Both situations entailed rhetorical constraints in which appeals to long-standing tradition were unavailable. In each case, the choice was made to target the scenic properties of the environment. In the case of the Promise Keepers, the stadium itself promised a fresh, new physical locale for men to gather together under a common purpose. Stadium event promotional videos often depict a fun, even celebratory (or party) atmosphere of which audiences can partake.

Importantly, the stadium was a place where men could get away from the tedium of day-to-day existence. Insofar as this tedium could be identified with a particular set of physical locations (the home, the office, and even the church), the stadium event became the rhetorical ground upon which new experiences could be built. In this there is a clever, perhaps unconscious, point of identification which links a new scenic experience with the building of a new tradition. As a result, a harmonious relationship between identity and recruitment is engendered in the
recruiting tactics that induced men to partake of a new experience (the stadium event) even as the rhetoric constructed for them a new religious identity.

Additionally, early Promise Keepers' literature presents an offer for men to seize a "unique opportunity...to recapture the spiritual climate in [their] homes and cultivate a heart for other men" (McCartney, 1992, p.11), even as the stadium events were challenging audiences to "commit to mutual discipleship, reaching out to others, and seeking God's favor for a national revival" (Phillips, 1994, p. 6). At a time when Promise Keepers was still in its incipient stages, the implicit message was that these initial recruits would bear important responsibility as God's chosen initiators, and ultimately his (human) benefactors for nationwide spiritual revival.

McCartney's efforts at recruiting players were eminently successful. Bolstered by key players, particularly at the skill positions, Colorado University's football teams went on to achieve national prestige, winning several Big Eight championships, and even a share of the national championship in 1990 (McCartney, 1995). That same year McCartney would win a host of major coaching awards, securing a privileged position in the elite ranks of college football's finest. Stadium attendance and university enrollment figures also rose
significantly. The latter statistics are something that McCartney points to with considerable pride (McCartney, 1995), and it is interesting to note that his later vision for religious revival placed a similar importance upon stadium attendance figures as a measure of practical success.

Questions about McCartney's abilities as a coach had largely been answered at one level. He had, after all, achieved a level of success unparalleled at Colorado University. The persona of a successful college football coach had been established. As mentioned previously, however, there was a religious dimension to this persona as well. This latter dimension would prove to be a source of considerable controversy, and one which would become a part of the ongoing conversation in Boulder throughout McCartney's coaching tenure.

It should be noted that McCartney apparently intended for his religious views to feature prominently in his vision for the football team from the outset of his tenure at Colorado University. During his initial meeting with the Colorado University Board of Regents, for instance, McCartney declared that God would be his number one priority and dedicated the university's football program to the "lordship of Jesus Christ" (D. Wardell, telephone
interview). What was far less than clear was the extent to which McCartney's religious interests would be held up as a matter of public criticism.

In 1985, the ACLU charged McCartney with holding mandatory prayer meetings for his players and granting preferential treatment (i.e., playing time) to those players who agreed with the coach's religious views (Teitcher, 1992). Although McCartney fervently denied the charges of favoritism, he made no apologies concerning his religious views, nor of his desire to see those views openly expressed in voluntary team prayer meetings. Owing to pressure from the ACLU, the university subsequently adopted an official policy statement forbidding all athletic coaches from conducting mandatory team prayers and from giving preferential treatment to athletes on the basis of anything but ability (Teitcher, 1992). The team prayer meetings continued.

Over time, additional articles appeared, some supportive, others substantially less so, which continued to raise questions about McCartney's penchant for integrating his religious and professional identities. They apparently had little effect on McCartney's attitude or tactics. And while periodic incidents of player unrest and misconduct continued to provide grist for the opposition's mill, the case of McCartney vs. "the people of Colorado" in all practicality succeeded or failed in
proportion to the football team's on-field performance. The articles did serve an important rhetorical function, however, in making the issue a matter of ongoing interest within the community.

In 1989, two events, coupled with their subsequent portrayal in the media, decisively transformed the rhetorical character of the debate from one of public interest to that of public spectacle. First came the reports that McCartney's daughter, Kristi, had conceived a child out of wedlock. The father had been identified as Sal Aunese, McCartney's prize recruit and starting quarterback for The CU football team. Denver's Westword, an alternative newsweekly, published an article, "CU Football Players Score! But Coach Bill McCartney is the loser" (Claussen, 1996, p. 40). The cover of that same newsweekly read, "The Sinning Season: CU Coach Bill McCartney keeps the faith -- and gets a grandson fathered by his star quarterback" (McCartney, 1995, p.52).

As understandably painful as it was for McCartney and his family, the article, in an important sense, actually undermined the very rhetorical dichotomy it meant to underscore. Opposition to McCartney's tactics had generally been framed within a public-versus-private context. As Denver attorney and local ACLU representative, Judd Golden had stated, "I don't care if [McCartney] takes every Sunday off to hit the bully pulpit. He can wear a
collar around the house for all I care. He just needs to keep it out of the football program" (Teitcher, 1992, p. C-1).

In choosing to public-ize this incident, however, the Westword article demonstrated that one's private affairs, insofar as they involved religious values, were very much a public matter. The issue was not whether one's private religious values should be integrated into one's public identity, but rather how those values were to be characterized in relation to that identity.

The second event was as emotionally devastating to the community as the former had been to McCartney. In September of that same year, Sal Aunese died of cancer. A public memorial service was held at the University. Two thousand members of the community, including a host of local and regional dignitaries -- including then Colorado Governor Roy Romer -- came to pay tribute to the young man (McCartney, 1995). Incredibly, Aunese had become a "born again" Christian shortly before his death. He had even written a letter to his teammates exhorting them to, "Strive only for victory each time we play, and trust in the Lord for He truly is the way!" (McCartney, 1995, p. 63). The football team decided to dedicate the year to the memory of Aunese (McCartney, 1995). It was the season they would win the coveted national championship.
Thus, while it is true that McCartney had long been the target of media criticism, most of that criticism represented a substantive attempt to debate the relationship between his religious views and his team's on-field performances. 1989 marked a decisive turn in both the way the problem was characterized, as well as the effect that characterization would have on the community. Subsequent episodes involving McCartney's public stand on abortion and his stand against homosexuality are telling in this regard. McCartney received numerous letters both in support and against his positions (McCartney, 1995). What is important to note is that McCartney's persona now had a singular capacity to generate a substantial degree of community sentiment.

The conflicting interests germane to professional and religious identity found credible, if controversial, personification in the person of Bill McCartney. If, as some writers suggest, McCartney's persona divided a community (Teitcher, 1992), it also seems apparent that his persona became an important source of attraction for thousands of men for whom McCartney cut a heroic figure on the religious side of the divide. Consistent with Boulder's demography, McCartney was a white, affluent male who commanded significant respect in a profession, not only heralded for its cultural popularity, but one that offers numerous points of identification around cultural
notions of masculinity. College football is, perhaps, the most popular of team-based, athletic events whose participants are men engaged in competition with other men.

But the lifestyle of the kind afforded to white males of affluent status does come with a price. The price for McCartney, and probably many others, includes long hours spent at work and correspondingly little time spent at home. It means an unrelenting amount of pressure to excel, to beat one's opponents, in the marketplace. Expressed in Promise Keepers' literature, the price becomes a source of frustration and guilt, one which McCartney frequently and candidly expresses both in his autobiography and in his stadium event speeches.

For all of his frank confessions, however, never does McCartney question his commitment in principle to his faith and family. What is made a matter of frank confession is his inability to live up to those principles. Here, then, are additional points of identification afforded by McCartney's persona. McCartney's failures are the failures of many evangelical men. As well, McCartney could be perceived as having stood up to intense public pressure from "the enemy" to compromise his religious values. In becoming a coaches'
coach, and an evangelical's evangelical, McCartney, for these men, became a "man's man," an identity to which every Promise Keeper aspires.

It was this prior public persona that gained McCartney access to speak in churches in and around the Boulder Colorado area where most of the initial recruiting occurred. It was this persona which gave McCartney, particularly among male audiences, significant credibility to speak as a leader of and among men. And it was this persona which cut a sympathetic figure for males who saw in McCartney's battles with the media, their own successes and failures, as husbands and as fathers, but who, nonetheless, were persuaded, like McCartney, that the battle was worth going public over in a community seemingly hostile to the very idea. Finally, it was this prior public persona that would prove to be pivotal in warming local audiences to the very idea of appropriating Boulder's public event centers for expressly religious purposes.

(Re)appropriating the Public Spectacle

As I suggested earlier, Promise Keepers' early success in recruiting men to the movement-organization via its stadium events lay in providing men with a relatively large, public space to give free and legitimate expression to ostensibly private religious beliefs. But it is in the
religious (re)appropriation of the public spectacle itself where Promise Keepers' initial recruiting strategy was most powerfully evidenced.

Historically, of course, public spectacles have long been a legitimate mode of religious expression germane to particular cultures. Indeed, such spectacles have been instrumental in fostering cultural unity and identity. The opulent festivals and ceremonies of the ancient Jews, Greeks, and Egyptians are among the more obvious examples of cultures in which religious beliefs find exuberant expression in the mode of the public spectacle. Among the more notable manifestations of the public spectacle within evangelicalism in this century are the Crusades of Billy Sunday, and later, of course, Billy Graham. Such events, however ephemeral in duration, do engender a sense of community. It is the fervent participation in a common target of identification by relatively large numbers of people in a common spatial-cultural location that transforms the mere public event into the public spectacle, and with it, the possibility of initiating a common cultural identity.

In the case of the Promise Keepers, the idea of filling a stadium initially targeted local area audiences. And while McCartney's prior public persona gave him an authoritative voice by which to attract potential stadium attendees, it was that persona's relationship to the
public spectacle of Colorado University football which paved the way for audience attraction to the early Promise Keepers' stadium events. Owing to the efforts of both McCartney and the media, the very identity of Colorado University football had been up for grabs for some time. Lurking behind each game there lay the specter of a transcendent meaning in which each victory or loss could be held up for judgment framed in religious terms.

The opposition against this attempt originally targeted McCartney's coaching tactics, but largely failed in proportion to the coach's on-field success. Later media strategies targeted McCartney's personal life in an attempt to discredit his religious beliefs, per se, and thereby divorce any positive identification between them and Colorado University football. And so the battle proceeded.

Whether the strategy was more or less successful in extirpating any religious meaning from the Colorado University football program is largely irrelevant to this analysis. What is relevant is that these events provided significant rhetorical groundwork toward the construction of a public spectacle that was decidedly religious in meaning. Whatever else it may have symbolized, early Promise Keepers' stadium events represented a zealous, if numerically modest, show of support for and participation in, a cultural battle over the public expression of

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religious values. Identification with McCartney's persona and the Colorado University football program were central areas of attraction in what was perceived as a legitimate attempt at reappropriating Boulder's public event centers for religious purposes.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Promise Keepers' first official event at Fulsom's Event Center would find a majority of its attendees wearing Colorado University football T-shirts. Nor is it surprising that subsequent conventions held at Colorado University's football stadium would feature speeches from current and former university football players. Too, the bouncing of beach balls around the stadium, call and response chants from opposite sides of the stadium, extended versions of "the wave," and prolonged verbal outbursts which were prominent at these events are the kinds of behaviors which are more readily identified with fan activity at Colorado University football games than with religious revivals per se. The crowd was never more vociferous than when McCartney, always the final voice at these events, took the stage (D. Wardell, telephone interview).

There is reason to pause at this point in my analysis. In choosing to emphasize the role of McCartney's persona and the allure of reappropriating a stadium for religious purposes, I do not mean to discount the importance of the various messages, per se, promulgated by
the Promise Keepers. The missives of "integrity" and "reconciliation," the call for men to be better husbands and fathers espoused by Promise Keepers' speakers undoubtedly resonated deep within an evangelical community struggling to harmonize its sense of the spiritual with its white, affluent-class lifestyle.

That said, the fact remains that before such messages were publicly received, audiences were sold on the idea of attending to them in physical locations which redounded with secular, cultural significance. Stadiums are locations in which significant cultural events are attended by large numbers of people who, although diverse in many ways, generally expect to participate in what for them, will amount to a shared, corporate experience. The notion of shared experience is a highly useful abstraction, capable of subsuming the myriad differences in concrete particulars of motive, taste, and ideology.

Testimonial data obtained from Promise Keepers' official website suggests that the experience of shared community is not only what these men are drawn to, but also what they take from the event:

We will be attending with a large group of our black brothers which I feel will be a wonderful experience for me and my father (Limburg, 1997).

It was profound for me to sit in a stadium of 60,000...I met brother after brother in spirit of unity (Mumby, 1997).
It was an undescernible [sic] experience. Just the sight alone of all those men praying, praising, and singing to the Lord (Stachelski, 1996).

What a Great experience!...I've never experienced praise and worship on the scale like that before (Jenkins, 1996).
It was an absolutely awesome experience to see 50,000 men boldly declaring Jesus was their Lord and Savior (Mowell, 1996).

From this view, it is understandable that any given stadium event finds members of the audience engaging in the kinds of playful, celebratory behavior so typical of Promise Keepers' stadium events. The inevitable Styrofoam airplane launched from the upper decks, the ubiquitous beach balls which sprout everywhere, and the random call and response chants rarely, if ever, occur during the officially-sanctioned messages. Rather, these acts are voluntary, committed apart from the official centers of attraction by and for the audience itself. Cumulatively, they are signs suggestive of a shared intent on the part of an audience to participate in, even construct for itself, a common corporate experience. The cumulative addition of these acts, combined with their repetition throughout the conference join together to reinforce the sense of community.

The success of Promise Keepers' recruitment efforts in these early years lay in the successful negotiation of the tension between unity and diversity, a negotiation in which audiences themselves actively, if symbolically,
played a central role. Further aiding this effort was Promise Keepers' choice to locate its audiences metaphorically within the concept of team unity. This unity further came to be associated, perhaps unconsciously, with team victory with its reappropriation of the public spectacle. The battle against the enemies of religious expression and values in Boulder became waged in the one or two locations where numerous culturally-significant battles had been fought (and usually won) in the past by its leader. In claiming the stadium for its own purposes, Promise Keepers capitalized on the implicit notion that holding a religious event in a place designated for the secular public spectacle represented a kind of occupation, even a "takeover" of what such a space meant. And with that takeover there followed all of the culturally-unifying power with which public spectacles are endowed.

This explains why Promise Keepers places so much emphasis on the filling of entire stadiums. It is a numbers game in which individual weakness and failure are proportionately subverted in relation to the corporate worth of the community, a worth that continues to be measured in substantial degree in terms of sheer numbers. As long as large numbers continue to attend these events, there is good reason for Promise Keepers' leaders and audiences alike to believe that an important, if symbolic,
victory has indeed occurred. It was this sense of community, and of community victory, I believe, which would provide important emotional and ideological impetus toward Promise Keepers' eventual national expansion.

In his (1997) doctoral dissertation entitled, Men's Search for Male Friendship, Fuller Theological Seminary graduate, George E. Sears, argues that the contemporary male psyche is characterized by an unspoken desire and profound inability to find and maintain close male friendships. Factors accounting for this, according to Sears, include the general estrangement between fathers and sons, a dearth of mentors in men's young adult years, individualism, competition, and homophobia.

Later in the dissertation, Sears recounts, in up-til-then uncharacteristic pathos, his experience at the 1995 Promise Keepers' stadium event in Seattle, Washington. By his own account, his attendance at the event had largely been motivated by scholarly concerns. While Sears notes, among other aspects, the various themes of commitment and integrity articulated by the conference's speakers, the only fact about the event that he sees fit to mention more than once was the sixty-four thousand men who were in attendance. It is a figure which he goes on to indicate represented the "largest number of men, or people, for that matter, ever in the Dome" (p. 195).
Sears goes on to conclude that the "Promise Keeper movement" has contributed and should further contribute to the restoration of maleness as a means of establishing relationships in a positive way" (p.197). What is somewhat surprising about this conclusion is that it seems to have been arrived at largely as a result of the emotional experience derived from the stadium event itself. Sears was well aware of Promise Keepers' vision prior to his attendance at the event. He was familiar with Promise Keepers' literature and had even interviewed some of the order's members. It appears that Sears' stadium experience led to a kind of conversion, taking him from a position of mere scholarly observer to that of an enthusiastic supporter. My purpose in including this example is to further suggest that the allure of the public spectacle, reappropriated for religious ends, and its ability to forge a sense of corporate religious unity, even among the intellectually-minded of evangelical persuasion, should not be underestimated.

In sum, then, the McCartney's prior public persona, audience perceptions concerning the public expression of spiritual values, and Promise Keepers' growing success in reappropriating Boulder's public event centers for religious purposes cumulatively formed the rhetorical basis for a recruitment strategy that carried Promise
Keepers into the summer of 1993 -- the year that McCartney's vision of filling an entire stadium was finally realized -- and beyond.

It is again worth noting an episode which occurred during Promise Keepers' early stages that brings to light how the conflicting interests germane to the exigencies of identity and recruitment force rhetorical considerations. The episode occurred during the first conference in 1991 and was related to me by Promise Keeper co-founder Dave Wardell. At some point during the conference, but prior to McCartney's public address, a banner had been raised in back of the speaking platform which read "Bill McCartney's Men of Integrity." At the time, there was, in fact, no official name for the movement-organization, though clearly its leaders were setting forth an identity centering around some notion of manhood. The conference itself had simply been titled, "A Gathering of Men."

The idea for the banner had come from the group's president, Randy Phillips. Phillip's purpose in displaying the banner was essentially to provide a further point of identification which the men in attendance could parley into their recruiting efforts for the coming year. Although the movement-organization's founders clearly meant to emphasize the its Christian identity, some and perhaps much of the initial drawing power continued to center around the prior public persona of Bill McCartney.

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McCartney, however, knew nothing of the banner. It wasn't until he approached the stage to speak that he saw it for the first time. McCartney's first words to the audience were specifically about the banner. He stated that he didn't mind if people wanted to use his name to promote this meeting as long as everyone realized that the gathering was not about him, but rather about the work that God wanted to do in the lives of men willing to take a stand for their religious values. That was McCartney's public rhetoric.

Privately, as reported by Wardell, McCartney collared Phillips immediately after the event, and looking as "though he wanted to kill [Phillips]," told the president that his name was never to be used in that fashion again. Apparently, McCartney was deeply concerned about having a movement of God too closely identified with a single individual, however effective a recruiting strategy it may have been at the time. It was this conflict of interests between the exigencies relative to identity and recruiting that pressed the young movement-organization's leaders into finally deciding on a name. Hence, the name "Promise Keepers" was born.

This episode is one of the more important, in a series of episodes, which illustrates how Promise Keepers' leaders were forced to find rhetorical solutions to the conflicting interests relevant to identity and
recruitment. The new name signaled a move away from a titular head and paved the way for a more reticulate and acephalous organizational identity. It opened up avenues for a multiple-voiced rhetoric which would eventually free Promise Keepers from being too closely associated with provincial interests, thereby allowing it to expand to a national level of influence. To be sure, McCartney's persona continued to be a source of rhetorical attraction for the movement-organization. But it is difficult to imagine Promise Keepers selling the rhetoric of a "nationwide movement of God," where the identity of that movement was too closely associated with a single individual. And there was always the danger that should anything happen to the leader, the movement would suffer likewise.

Discipleship and the Small Group

Following the 1991 conference, Promise Keepers launched a systematic and concentrated effort toward realizing the second component of its vision: active and ongoing discipleship. To realize this, two additional recruitment mechanisms were created, "the field ministries division" and the "men's small group." The field ministries division was created to achieve two primary goals: 1) to motivate conference attendees to start and/or participate in a men's ministry within their local church and 2) to assist the local church in the development of
men's ministry leadership (Handbook, Key Man/Ambassador Ministries, 1996). The division has developed into a well-organized communication infrastructure, moving from Promise Keepers' central leadership in Denver, Colorado, all the way down to the individual Promise Keeper at the local church level. Beginning with Promise Keepers' central offices, the infrastructure is hierarchically arranged, and includes a "National Field Ministries Division," "Regional Managers" "State Field Representatives," local area "Task Forces," "Ambassadors," and "Key Men" (Handbook, Key Man/Ambassador Ministries, 1996, p. 11).

While Promise Keepers holds a number of regional and local conferences (e.g., "wakeup calls," leadership seminars), the majority of its recruiting efforts centers around the construction of two distinct rhetorical situations. The first situation is the stadium event; the second situation is that of the men's small group. Each of these situations serves the twofold function of attracting new recruits and maintaining the interest of those already recruited.

For both new and seasoned recruits, the stadium event offers the attraction of a new corporate religious experience and the opportunity to engage in a public demonstration of religious values. Perhaps more importantly, however, both situations provide compelling
evidence that the obligation to recruitment itself -- a vital part of the Promise Keeper identity to be discussed shortly -- is successfully being met. And while the stadium event, as has been discussed, is a vital part of Promise Keepers' recruiting efforts, there is a good deal of evidence that indicates a majority of new recruits actually come by way of initiation into the small group (Rabey, 1996).

As concerns the small group, recruiting strategies, both initial and ongoing, are centered around the metaphoric notion of a safe haven. Independent telephone interviews with Dave Wardell and Delta region senior area manager, Gary Reynolds (July 19, 1997), confirm that the small group's primary point of attraction lies in providing an environment where men can feel free to talk about deeply personal issues which they would find difficult or impossible to address with others, including their wives, friends, and even pastors. Issues open for discussion can range from masturbation and post-marital sexual temptation to racial and denominational bigotry. The small group is a "place to drop [one's] guard and be honest," where members can rest secure in knowing that they can "open-up" and not be subjected to criticism or judgment (The Next Step, 1995).
Small group participants willingly acquiesce to Promise Keepers' small group dictum that states:

Honesty, confidentiality, availability, and accountability are important components of a man's growth that rarely develop outside of the small group. In the context of such covenant relationships, a man willingly grants other men the right to inquire about his relationship with God, his commitment to his family, his sexuality, his financial dealings, and his relationships to others (believers and non-believers). Together, they form a team that is committed to advance God's kingdom in their own lives and beyond (Handbook, Key Man/Ambassador Ministries, 1996, p. 7.)

As with the stadium events, there is the clear call to subvert individuality for the good of the group. At times, one's manhood seems built along the principle of commitment to the group. Here, then is a point of identification between the stadium event and the small group. Both situations, and the rhetoric they engender, accentuate the tension between individual and corporate identity.

On the other hand, Promise Keepers' rhetoric aimed at the small group uses a strategy of identification which caters to the democratic impulse of its subscribers. Groups are allowed to vary with respect to meeting times, number of members allowed, racial, economic, social status, and religious affiliation. Part of the initial attraction is undoubtedly linked to the novel experience
of diversity. As one man put it, "Let's face it, a couple of years ago I never prayed for a black man; today I do" (The Next Step, 1995).

Individual identity and the freedom to express that identity does have its place, group solidarity notwithstanding. The groups are said to be "participant heavy and leadership light" (The Next Step, 1995). Particularly in its initial stages, Promise Keepers requires only that individuals have a desire to join, to "just come and be a part of us" (The Next Step, 1995).

Within this framework, however, there is a hierarchal motive rhetorically embedded within the small group program in order to maintain the allegiance of recruits. Each group, however organized, is understood to move through several levels of intimacy. The first stage finds men whose relations among one other are characterized as "acquaintances" (The Next Step, 1995). Over time, the men progress to higher stages of "friendship" and finally "brotherhood." Each stage is marked by increasing amounts of self-disclosure, trust, and confidentiality. Promise Keepers estimates the entire process to take about a year (The Next Step, 1995).

It is tempting to view the Promise Keepers' small group situation as one which uses the evangelical idea of "Bible study," and its attendant preoccupation with scriptural reading, as a rhetorical strategy meant to
legitimate the group's real identity as a safe haven for discussing whatever personal issues or crises are most pressing at the moment. Yet another, and certainly Promise Keepers preferred way of viewing these groups, targets the group's identity as a safe haven as the primary means of drawing men into a shared corporate experience in which scriptural study is the group's primary aim.

A less reductive, and in my view, a more satisfying way of viewing the small group would be to divorce its role from such either or terms. The small group situation attracts individuals whose needs require both the communication of deeply personal issues and the attempt to locate those issues within the context of sustained bible study. Not all recruits, however, whether new or seasoned, will at all times be singularly motivated by the desire to study Scripture. There will be times when members simply want to vent their frustrations and failures. The reverse will be true as well. The point to be taken here is that the small group, conceived of as a rhetorical situation, is one in which the particular exigencies of the moment are capable, at any moment, of rhetorical modification and redress. It is this flexibility in purpose and identity which, I believe, accounts for the small group's success in attracting and maintaining its recruits.
While it is clear that the small group plays a vitally important role in Promise Keepers' initial and ongoing recruiting efforts, a further elaboration of its connection to the stadium event should be given. Both rhetorical situations operate in a mutually complimentary relationship, with each serving as a recruiting device for the other. At the stadium events, for instance, attendees are frequently challenged to start small groups at their local church or intensify their level of commitment in existing ones. Toward this effort, Promise Keepers has invoked an interesting strategy of identification, linking the experiential significance of the stadium event with that of the small group. Promise Keeper's promotional video entitled *The Next Step* (1995) provides evidence of this strategy.

The tape begins with an array of aural and visually juxtaposed sounds and images. Wide pan shots of stadiums filled with men are followed by and juxtaposed around images of men, often gathered together in small groups, caught in emotional outbursts ranging from laughter to tears and engaging in acts of prayer and hand-holding. The segment closes with a flurry of pans of stadiums filled with men and backed by an accompanying audio of tens of thousands of men roaring their approval. The effort is a clear attempt to recapture the more emotionally spectacular aspects of the stadium event.
After about forty-five seconds, two different messages appear on the screen. The background message is captioned: "The Next Step." A second message moves across the screen in the foreground and reads "From the event, to the small group." The message functions as a transition between what has already been shown and what is (or ought to) to follow. The content of the message thus specifically identifies two discrete situations, as well as the temporal order in which they are to be experienced -- the stadium event followed by the small group. It is also important to note, however, that beyond the conceptual identification of the two situations, there is an attempt to bring audiences into a state of emotional and behavioral identification as well. The suggestion is that the emotional intensity and even the specific behaviors of laughing, crying, praying, holding hands that are part of the stadium event experiences can be appropriately transferred to the small group situation.

Now, the relationship between the stadium event and the small group also works in the other direction. Prior to the stadium event season, Promise Keepers disseminates, a series of promotional literature and videotapes intended for small group consumption and designed to attract men to the next stadium event. In this way, the two rhetorical situations compliment each another in the attempt to attract and maintain recruits.
In conjunction with these two rhetorical situations, Promise Keepers has made recruitment a central component of the Promise Keeper identity itself. Of the seven codified promises comprising the rhetorical core of the Promise Keeper identity, three -- promises two, six, and seven -- are strongly suggestive of an active commitment toward recruitment:

A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.

A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of Biblical unity.

A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to The Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

The latter promise invokes a clear strategy of identification by invoking select biblical passages to authorize its recruiting efforts. Ideally, then, every Promise Keeper regardless of station or status is, at some level, a recruiter. This is another instance in which the exigencies of identity and recruitment are rhetorically negotiated to meet the common end of Promise Keepers' vision.

Of course, most movements and movement-organizations encourage some level of recruitment among followers. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for instance, makes recruitment central to its organizational efforts. The social movement
dictum which states that recruitment occurs along the lines of a previously established network of relationships, however, reaches an impressive level of professionalization in Promise Keepers' organization.

Within the field ministries hierarchy previously mentioned, the Key Man and Ambassador positions are particularly important recruiting mechanisms. Together, they are responsible for the bulk of the grass roots recruiting efforts aimed at fostering the active and ongoing discipleship of men. The Key Man ministry, in particular, has been instrumental in Promise Keepers' recruiting success. Promise Keepers indicates that the period between 1991-1992 saw approximately 250 churches become active participants in the Key Man ministry. As of January 1st, 1996, Promise Keepers estimated that some 10,000 Key Men and over 2,000 Ambassadors across the United States were actively involved in the grass roots recruiting process (D. Wardell, telephone interview). For this reason alone some analysis of the rhetoric aimed at delineating the identity and purpose of these positions is warranted.

In practical terms, most individuals who aspire to become Key Men or Ambassadors are motivated initially through a Promise Keepers stadium event experience. This is another way in which the stadium event serves as a recruiting mechanism, linking the religious order's two-
fold vision. Promise Keepers, however, offers a substantial amount of rhetoric aimed at capitalizing on this initial motivation, and it is this literature to which I now turn.

According to the official (1996) Promise Keepers' Key Man/Ambassador Ministries Handbook, Key Men are given the task of building men's ministries in local churches. Key Men function as ideological and communicative links between the local church and Promise Keepers' central leadership. Key Men are typically lay leaders or pastoral staff members of their local church. They must agree with the Promise Keepers' Statement of Faith and must be committed to both the Promise Keepers' Purpose Statement and to the Seven Promises.

Key Men candidates generally undergo a brief, usually weekend-long, training period (Reynolds, telephone interview). During the training session, candidates are counseled by Promise Keepers' field representatives and given access to literature, video and audio material, and even a telephone hotline. These sources enumerate various strategies on how to recruit men into local men's ministries as well as how to maintain the active and ongoing participation of their recruits (Handbook, Key Man/Ambassador Ministries, 1996).
Ambassadors, on the other hand, are volunteer representatives of the Promise Keepers who represent the organization to the larger church community. Ambassadors are acknowledged leaders in the community and may be assigned from several to a dozen churches in any given area (Handbook, Key Man/Ambassador Ministries, 1996). The Ambassador's primary purpose is to further assist Key Men in their efforts at starting and maintaining a local Promise Keepers-affiliated men's ministry. An ambassador is given the task of contacting churches in the community to identify and recruit Key Men and to "report on the progress and status of men's ministry development in his assigned churches" (Handbook, Key Man/Ambassador Ministries, 1996, p.25). Ambassadors must be recommended by their pastors and approved by the National Ambassador Office.

Both Key Men and Ambassadors are held to fairly rigid standards of accountability. Candidates for both positions are required to fill out an official Promise Keepers "Response Form" which is then sent to the order's central leadership for final consideration. The response items for Ambassador candidates are particularly exacting, calling for a fairly detailed character assessment.

Among the items included in the Ambassador Response Form, for instance, are those calling for the candidate's personal assessment of his relationship with his wife, as
well as any tendencies toward what Promise Keepers refers to as "addictive -- sexual and chemical -- behavior" (Handbook, Key Man/Ambassador Ministries). Some items require the additional and joint assessment of the candidate on the part of wives and pastors. And both Ambassador and Key Man candidates agree to provide formal, written notice of termination to both their pastor and the Promise Keepers' organization should anything be done or said which would "compromise the integrity of the ministry" (Handbook, Key Man/Ambassador Ministries, p.17).

The creation of the Key Man and Ambassador ministries further evidences the important relationship between recruitment and identity in the Promise Keepers' order. With so much of the recruiting work being done at the grass roots level, it is critical that the organization set clear parameters for the kinds of individuals most favorably suited for this purpose. The construction of these parameters is clearly rhetorical and includes prescriptions for moral character, as well as the rhetorical territory over which Key Men and Ambassadors have authority.

Within the Field Ministry's division, there occurred an interesting episode which provides yet another case study in how Promise Keepers rhetorically negotiates the conflicting interests germane to the exigencies of identity and recruitment. Originally, the Key Man ministry
was labeled the Point Man ministry. The latter term was abandoned because another Christian organization, also dedicated to the family, was already using the term. In order to justify the terministic switch, Promise Keepers invoked the same metaphoric strategy used to legitimate its stadium events: the appeal to the "team" and "team unity." As Ken Moldenhauer, Assistant Manager for the National Office of Key Man and Ambassador Ministries, put it: "With the name change to Key Man, we're saying men's ministry is not one man, but team leadership. With several key men involved, the health and longevity of the group is enhanced" (Moldenhauer, 1995).

The switch was justified metaphorically on the grounds that it gave more emphasis to Promise Keepers' team-oriented approach to men's ministry. The implication was, of course, that the term Point Man over-emphasized individual effort. The new term was meant to underscore the notion that this important position was part of a team of key players. In this way, a conflict of interests was mediated which allowed Promise Keepers to modify, metaphorically, the identity of this position even as its actual function in recruiting remained unchanged.

Because its grass roots recruiting efforts occur within and alongside already-established local church hierarchy, Promise Keepers has the additional challenge of negotiating the potentially conflicting interests between
their recruiting efforts and any given church's immediate hierarchy. These interests necessarily involve questions of authority (Promise Keepers vs. the local church) and identity (e.g., Promise Keepers vs. Baptist, Evangelical etc.). Promise Keepers has strategically worked to articulate and incorporate the interests of local church leaders within the framework of its recruiting efforts.

Here again, both the stadium event and the small group men's ministry compliment each other's recruiting efforts. For instance, Promise Keepers holds conferences specifically for pastors and other religious clergy. At these conferences, also attended by Key Men and Ambassadors, clergy are held up to corporate prayer, enthusiastically endorsed by Promise Keepers' speakers, and are even brought on stage during which time they are made the subject of vociferous and prolonged cheering.

At the level of the local church, both Key Men and Ambassadors must be appointed by their local pastor, and must operate under their authority. Key Men and Ambassadors are also required to give of their time and resources to their local church pastors in order to "increase the commitment level of each man to his church" (Handbook, Key Man/Ambassador Ministries, 1996, p. 15). Pastors also fill out detailed Response Forms concerning the Ambassador applicant which are sent directly to Promise Keepers' central offices. Taken together, these
efforts constitute rhetorical inducements by which Promise Keepers attempts to manage the potentially conflicting interests associated with identity and authority among Promise Keepers' central leadership, local area recruiters, and local church leadership. As a result, Promise Keepers can boast a considerable degree of success at securing the active commitment of local church leadership in the recruiting process.

Summary

This chapter has examined the exigence of recruitment with regard to Promise Keepers. Consistent with the findings of other social movement studies, this study provides evidence to support the social movement dictum that locates recruiting success within a network of preexisting interpersonal relationships. In addition, however, I have argued that Promise Keepers' recruiting efforts, particularly early on, greatly benefited from the cumulative effect of several interrelated rhetorical components: 1) Promise Keepers' co-founder Bill McCartney's prior public persona and its zealous representation of the legitimate public expression of religious faith; 2) the allure of the public spectacle, reappropriated for religious ends; and 3) the efficacy of both in generating a unified corporate purpose, and identity among evangelically-minded audiences. The
momentum generated by these rhetorical components would eventually serve as a catalyst in bringing the scope of Promise Keepers' influence to a national level.

At this level, I have identified Promise Keepers' subsequent construction of two rhetorical situations, the annual holding of two-day conferences in culturally-significant public event centers across the nation, the men's small group, and the complimentary relationship between them as being instrumental in Promise Keepers' national-level recruiting efforts. Both of these recruiting situations were further aided by the advent of a professionalized system of recruitment, punctuated by the construction of two recruiting positions (or identities) operating at the grass roots level. Along the way, I have shown how the idea of recruitment itself is woven into the very fabric of the Promise Keeper identity. Consequently, the individual commitment to recruitment is an ongoing priority, firmly ensconced, within each Promise Keeper.

As part of this analysis, I have also suggested the presence of metaphoric and identificational strategies which were used, sometimes unconsciously, to serve Promise Keepers' recruiting efforts. In an effort to further clarify the theoretical relationship between recruitment
and identity, I have also noted how these exigencies gave rise to both conflicting and harmonious interests which were themselves subject to rhetorical negotiation.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that the choice to ground my analysis in this chapter in rhetorical components which do not directly address the ideological aspects of Promise Keepers' messages, per se, should not be taken as an implicit endorsement of their immateriality. Clearly, ideology is quite important in Promise Keepers' success in recruiting. On the other hand, it is Promise Keepers' ideology that will be expressly addressed in the chapter that follows. The order's messages are rich in ambiguity. This ambiguity has engendered a considerable amount of oppositional rhetoric, the most vituperative of which actually comes from within its own evangelical ranks. It is to this oppositional rhetoric against the Promise Keepers to which I now turn.
CHAPTER SIX

THE EXIGENCE OF OPPOSITION

Introduction

This chapter examines the exigence of opposition to the Promise Keepers. Specific attention will be given to selective areas of ideological contestation, as well as to delineating the identification strategies used therein. Opposition to Promise Keepers is quite diverse in source and content. Consequently, it will be useful to reduce the scope of this opposition.

This chapter will proceed by dividing opposition to Promise Keepers into internal and external categories. By internal, I mean that opposition which arises in relation to and is characteristic of interest communities which adhere to a common ideological core of beliefs and practices consistent with evangelicalism. As delineated in Chapter Two, this core includes the final authority of Scripture, the tendency to interpret the Bible literally, the necessity of a personal experience of salvation through faith in Jesus, and an ongoing commitment to communicate the Christian gospel to a "lost and dying world."

External opposition to Promise Keepers proceeds from a set of premises generally incompatible with an evangelical worldview. These premises tend to reject traditional conceptions of biblical authority,
particularly in its more literalist interpretations. In addition, worldviews external to evangelicalism tend to view with considerable suspicion any religious ideology which threatens the economic, social, cultural, and political well-being of under-represented or disadvantaged interest communities. In this chapter, specific attention will be given to the efforts of the National Organization of Women in its rhetorical campaign against Promise Keepers.

A further point regarding the Promise Keepers' internal opposition requires consideration. Given evangelicalism's emphasis on biblical authority, it is expected that the Bible will serve as a vital inventional source both for Promise Keepers and its evangelical critics. It follows that internal opposition will use the biblical Scripture to show that Promise Keepers' ideology lies outside biblical parameters. Given this study's methodological approach, particular attention will be given to scriptural implant strategies of identification, if and when they are employed by Promise Keepers and its opposition.

Whether or not Promise Keepers' ideology is actually inconsistent with biblical Scripture is an issue more readily decided by the theologian. How that ideology is made to appear inconsistent with or lie outside of Scripture is a question ideally addressed by the
rhetorical scholar. Of course, scriptural implants may not be the only strategies used by Promise Keepers' internal opposition. As a result, this analysis is also concerned to discover alternative rhetorical strategies which have been used by Promise Keepers' internal opposition in the attempt to cast the order's ideology outside biblical purview. With these further considerations in mind, I now move to an analysis of the rhetoric of Promise Keepers' internal opposition.

Internal Opposition

It may come as some surprise to the reader that most of the criticism leveled against Promise Keepers issues from evangelical interest communities. Eric Wardell, Correspondence Editor of Promise Keepers, estimates that of the criticisms fielded in his department, eighty-percent are evangelical in origin (telephone interview with author, 21 November 1997). In fact, however, this phenomenon is nothing new. Historical accounts of popular evangelical movements, revivals, and awakenings in America, from Whitefield to Graham, clearly demonstrate evangelicalism's propensity toward castigating its own (cf., Marsden, 1991; Noll et al., 1994; Rifkin & Howard, 1979; Sweet, 1984)

Internal opposition against Promise Keepers ranges from the seemingly hysterical to the relatively reflective. For instance, one line of argument places
Promise Keepers in league with the "anti-Christ," arguing that the movement-organization is leading men into religious apostasy whose ultimate end will be realized in the global persecution of the "true believer." Less radically, another argument concludes that Promise Keepers and similar organizations are not the problem, but rather a contemporary manifestation of a much larger malady whose roots are located in evangelicalism's ongoing fascination with secularism and popular culture (Wells, 1993; Hagopian & Wilson, 1996). It is a telling indication of evangelicalism's fragmented nature that finds Promise Keepers the common target of various evangelical interest communities who yet disagree among themselves over how opposition to Promise Keepers is best handled.

In what remains evangelicalism's most comprehensive, rational treatment of Promise Keepers to date, Hagopian and Wilson (1996) frankly observe that:

some of the early critics of Promise Keepers have taken their shots, making a lot of noise and attempting to take no prisoners in the process...We believe that when interacting with brothers in Christ, firm and pointed criticism is not inconsistent with warm encouragement to do better, and to 'strengthen the things which remain' (Rev. 3:2) (p.23).

The discourse above contains a scriptural passage implanted in the text in order to privilege intra-community judgment. That is, the argument contains a
scriptural implant. Further analysis will show that there may be more to this strategy of identification than is immediately apparent.

The strategy, I suggest, actually involves three levels of identification entailing the distinct, albeit related, conceptions of biblical truth and biblical authority. The first level means to identify both the opposition's claim and the scriptural claim as being of the same logical type (Whittaker, 1998). An extended discussion concerning the logical status of various claims is beyond the scope of the present discussion. It will be sufficient for present purposes to note that not all claims, whether found in the Bible or not, entail similar notions of truth. For instance, there are claims whose truth is factual or empirical in type. The claim, "The man rode the bus to New York" would be of this type.

There are also claims of an extra-factual (or metaphysical) truth type. Many religious claims tend to be of this type. With still other types of claims, it becomes increasingly difficult to get a sense of their "truth" at all. The claims, "I prefer chocolate ice cream over vanilla ice cream" and "It is better to marry than remain single" are more likely to be taken as claims of preference and value, rather than truth per se.
This distinction is important in that different types of claims entail different kinds of criteria in their evaluation and carry different degrees of rhetorical force for audiences. In the case of metaphysical truth claims, the evaluative criteria is extra-rational. This is to say, with metaphysical truth claims, it becomes increasingly meaningless to evaluate their truth, and hence their rhetorical force, by recourse to rational criteria alone. The evangelical believer, for instance, does not weigh the evidence for and against the claim that "Christ ascended into heaven" in order to determine its truth value. Evangelicals may point to the evidence in support of such a claim, but for them, its truth status transcends the rational. Indeed, in the presence of all rational evidence to the contrary, an evangelical believer will remain convinced of the absolute truth of such claims.

Now, the point to be gleaned from all this is that evangelical audiences, convinced of the Bible's absolute truth, do not generally distinguish among different types of truth claims unless they are specifically directed to do so. Absent such directing, it becomes possible for nonbiblical claims (i.e., claims not directly found in the Bible), claims whose logical status could be perceived as that of preference, fact, or value, to be transformed into claims of metaphysical truth, with all of the transcendent (rhetorical) force granted such status.
To reiterate, the strategy at this level, simply means to grant equivalent truth status to claims which are not directly found in the Bible with those that are. The two claims given here are the opposition's claim that Promise Keepers must be subjected to "firm and pointed criticism" and the biblical passage in Revelation 3:2 stating, "Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God."

For the true believer, claims of the metaphysical truth type carry a degree of rhetorical force quite different than claims granted a different type of logical status. Otherwise, it would mean that the opposition's call to judge Promise Keepers would be as roughly potent as the call to choose one Bible translation over another. That is, the claim would be closer to one of preference, clearly not the kind of force that the opposition intends for its claims to carry.

As a final point of clarification, we can put this in terms of a disjunctive proposition in which the implied question reads: Either the opposition's claims are equivalent in truth-type to the passages cited from the Bible or they are not equivalent. Assent is gained at this level, perhaps unconsciously, in making the two equivalent.
At a second, and closely related level, the attempt is made to win assent to the content of the opposition's claim. It is admittedly difficult to distinguish a claim's logical type from its content. This difficulty may be overcome, however, by noting that it is possible to hold constant the content (or denotative meaning) of a claim but still allow for variation in its logical status. For instance, the claim, "It is better to marry than remain single" could be taken as a claim of value, preference, or fact. If fact, for instance, one would expect that statistical data showing the relative "happiness levels" for single versus married individuals would serve as appropriate evidence in verifying this claim's truth. Perceived as a metaphysical claim, however, its truth status would be beyond such "worldly" evaluative criteria.

In the discourse above, assent to the truth is achieved at this level by attempting to make equivalent in meaning the content of Revelations with the content of the opposition's claim that Promise Keepers ought to be subject to judgment or "pointed criticism." Although on the surface, these two claims appear to be somewhat different in meaning, the identification strategy calls for this very equivalence. These two levels, then, work together to grant a claim external to the Bible the same truth-carrying force as a claim internal to it.
Finally, the strategy calls for an equivalence of authority between claims found in the Bible and claims external to it. Here, assent in granting authority to a group or individual making an oppositional claim is a function of that claim's perceived association with the authority of the Bible. This authority may be expressly stated as the authority to "speak for God."

It is crucial to understand this point. What I am contending for here is a notion of relative levels of (religious) authority. While the Bible is considered a text of "final authority" by evangelicals, in fact, that authority is subject to higher levels of appeal. Pressed with the question of the authority of the Bible itself, evangelicals are likely to respond with statements which refer to a higher (transcendent) level of authority. Thus the question, "By what authority can one claim the Bible to be true" is likely to be answered, "By the authority of God" (or some closely allied term referring to a transcendent authority).

Specifically, then, identification at this level works to achieve an equivalence of authority between that by which biblical claims are made (God) and that by which Promise Keepers or its opposition's claims are made (God). With respect to the discourse cited above, this translates into the "God-given" authority to issue judgment. According to this analysis, then, scriptural implants,
here conceived as a strategy of identification, operate on three related levels of identification. Scriptural passages, implanted in discourse, attempt to warrant the truth and authority of claims external to the Bible by identifying them with claims found in the Bible.

Hagopian and Wilson's remarks may also be noted for the care taken in conveying the tone of its opposition. The tone is relatively warm and rational. These critics are careful to contrast their rationale for judgment with those less temperately inclined. Again, the issue is not whether Promise Keepers should be subject to criticism but rather how that criticism ought to be (rhetorically) handled.

The rhetoric of Promise Keepers is redolent with a synthesis of sports and war metaphors which cumulatively serve to heighten a sense of urgency. Immediate action is the call of the hour. Exhortations to "seize the day!" (Phillips, 1994, p.4) to get off the "sidelines" and "step up to the plate and assume leadership" (Hendricks, 1994, p.49), to "be a full time player," (Phillips, 1996, p.2) to get straight one's "marching orders," to fight the "spiritual war" (Phillips, 1994, p.9), and to take care not to "be caught celebrating yet, because the war is still on" (Richardson, 1996, p.207) are suggestive of a rhetoric which is both "action-oriented" and "offensively-minded" in character.
Given its "offensive" character, it may well be wondered whether a relatively subdued, rational rhetoric may be effectual against such rhetorical onslaught. In contradistinction to Hagopian and Wilson's approach, other critics have reacted with a rhetorical approach which is considerably more militant in thrust. As Van Patten (1997) writes:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

We owe nothing to these traitors, and godly pastors ought to turn the sheep away from them. It HAS TO BE assumed that Promise Keepers is right in this militant neo-inquisition mindset with the rest. Birds of a feather....(online).

In this discourse we may again note the explicit use of a scriptural implant. The first paragraph is lifted from 2 Tim 3:1-5. Although the opposition employs several biblical claims and at least four claims of its own, all three levels of identification are at work. At level one, the attempt is made to present the biblical claims and the opposition's statements as equivalent in truth-status. At level two, the attempt is made to win assent to the content of the opposition's claims by attempting to make it equivalent in meaning with that of the biblical
passages. Simply put, audiences are asked to assent to the equivalence in meaning between men who are Promise Keepers and those who are the arrogant "blasphemers" etc. spoken of in the Bible. At level three, the attempt is made to secure the authority to oppose Promise Keepers by identifying their claims with the authority of the biblical claims -- that is, the authority of God.

We may also notice in the terms "traitor" and "militant neo-inquisition" the framing of the opposition in a metaphor of war. It is not just any kind of war, however, but a "Holy War" to which this rhetoric points. The tone is relatively truculent and represents virtually the negative mirror image of Promise Keepers' positive call to arms. Cumulatively, the strategy means to deny Promise Keepers as even being of the same "family" as its opposition, thereby denying the order their very identity as evangelical.

It is at this point that a grounding metaphor begins to emerge in which the terms consistent with a war metaphor are mere surface tactics. This metaphor constitutes, I believe, the central area of rhetorical contestation between Promise Keepers and its critics. The metaphor of which I speak is one which equates the corporate identity of true believers with a body, or more precisely, as being the body of Christ.

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The metaphor itself is more accurately understood in reference to an extended analogy between the human body and the metaphysical concept of the body of Christ. While references to the body of Christ appear in a number of passages in the New Testament, the most systematic treatment occurs in 1 Corinthians 12. In the interest of brevity, I will include only those passages which most readily speak to this analogy as it relates to the rhetorical practices of Promise Keepers and its opposition:

The body is a unit though it is made up of many parts; and thought its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ....Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body...But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body...But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

From this vantage point, it becomes clearer how crucial to the evangelical identity the metaphor of the body of Christ is. It is an ultimate metaphor which transcends notions of race, gender, denominational status, or doctrinal orientation. Rhetorically, the metaphor of Christ's body becomes the final ground upon which all claims to the status of true believer are located. In
addition, the metaphor paves the way for the full force of rhetorical dichotomy -- a stock evangelical tactic -- in which one either is or is not a part of the body.

So understood, we are now in a position to appreciate more fully the rhetorical force that is brought to bear on the question of how opposition to Promise Keepers ought to be handled. The central area of contestation between Promise Keepers and its opposition concerns the latter's place in relation to the body of Christ. As the term "brothers in Christ" suggests, the evangelical interest community represented in Hagopian and Wells clearly locates Promise Keepers within the body of Christ. On the other hand, its call to "strengthen the things which remain" suggests that the function that Promise Keepers' part is filling is not without deficiency; hence the need it has to be strengthened. By implication, this interest community seeks to style itself as a corrective body part and by further implication seeks to locate its own function as being in authority over Promise Keepers.

The interest community represented in Van Natten denies Promise Keepers any place within the body of Christ and seems to point to the impossibility of its being or ever having been otherwise. In this view, correction or strengthening is not only incompatible with the interests of the body of Christ, it is wholly antithetical to it. If
Promise Keepers represents a foreign agent or alien body part altogether, what is called for is not a rhetoric of correction, but rather one of extirpation!

It is perhaps a telling indication of the centrality of the body of Christ metaphor that Promise Keepers' early rhetoric was very careful to locate its place in that body. In the beginning, Promise Keepers consistently identified itself as a "para-church organization," one whose function was to assist churches in and around the state of Colorado. Later, however, Promise Keepers' rhetoric moved to the relatively audacious level of a "nation wide movement of God."

It was at this point that critics began to question seriously the scope of its function in the body. For its part, Promise Keepers continued to express extreme confidence in the ever-expanding scope of its function. And if critics could not argue against the fact of the increase in the scope of the order's function -- by now Promise Keepers could boast a positive influence upon millions -- the only available recourse was to place that function outside the body entirely. In this way, Promise Keepers' boast of reaching a "nation of men" could be seen as an illegitimate attempt to construct or redefine for itself what "Christ's body" actually means.
This account is quite consistent with Promise Keepers' pattern of reaching out to more and more people, whatever their religious affiliation might be. Logically, the metaphor of the body assumes that its existence is prior to one's function in it. And if the scope of that function surpasses the parameters of the body, what is needed is not a reduction in the scope of its function but rather, an expanded notion of "the body."

Promise Keepers' confidence of its place in the body helps to explain why it has rarely addressed its critics directly. Its place in the body is relatively secure. More are the evangelical voices for than against Promise Keepers. Rhetorically considered, what this analysis suggests is that central point of contention between Promise Keepers and its opposition concerns the right to "own" the metaphor of the body, and alternatively to be owned by it. In this view, the battle being waged between Promise Keepers and its opposition is fundamentally rhetorical.

In sum, there is sharp disagreement among evangelical interest communities as to how opposition to Promise Keepers ought to be handled. As expected, internal opposition has employed scriptural implants against Promise Keepers. This analysis has argued that this particular strategy of identification operates at three levels. Evangelical critics of Promise Keepers use the
strategy seeks in attempt to discredit the order's claims as false and lacking the requisite religious authority. Moreover, I have argued for the centrality of the body of Christ metaphor to help explain why Promise Keepers' opposition believes it is justified in its efforts to mitigate the influence of Promise Keepers. Alternatively, it also helps to explain why Promise Keepers has heretofore been able to withstand such criticism. As long as there continues to be widespread perception that the order is serving a legitimate function in the body, it will remain relatively impervious to internal assault.

Having discussed the question of how and why internal opposition to Promise Keepers has been handled rhetorically, I now move to discuss the specific points of ideological dispute between the order and its internal opposition. I will focus on three specific charges against Promise Keepers: the charge of feminization, the charge of psychoheresy, and the charge of ecumenicalism.

Many are the evangelical voices which equate America's moral decline with the general breakdown in traditional notions about and roles concerning male identity. In this view, it is men, particularly Christian men, who have abdicated their God-given responsibility to govern the affairs of their homes and churches. As a result, females have been forced to fill roles they were never intended to occupy. The process, in turn, has led to
the systematic "feminization" of the American male in general and of the Christian Church in particular (Evans, 1994). This view further implies that the increase in positions of leadership held by females has resulted in a plethora of social ills that plague postmodern America, and a corresponding decline in evangelicalism's influence in the social order.

On the problem of feminization, both Promise Keepers and its internal opposition seem to be in agreement. Indeed, internal opposition credits Promise Keepers with bringing the problem to a level of mass (evangelical) consciousness heretofore unrealized (Dager, 1994; Hagopian and Wilson, 1996; Rugh, 1994). Disagreement stems from the way in which Promise Keepers has chosen to redress the problem.

For its part, Promise Keepers' rhetoric generally affirms the necessity of masculine leadership. Yet, there is little, if anything in Promise Keepers' rhetoric, which expressly prohibits female authority in the home or church. Rather its rhetoric emphasizes the notion of relational development between males and females. The problem of masculinity and masculine leadership is solved by emphasizing the role that relationships play in personal and corporate spiritual growth. The focus on relationships, per se, is meant to draw attention to the fact that males have been physically absent from those
domains (the home, the church) in which their presence is most required. After all, it does little good to speak to the details of leadership where both parties are not committed to being present.

This rhetoric in turn has prompted evangelical critics to chastise Promise Keepers for contributing to the very problem it means to confront. Relational approaches to home and church governance, say critics, are just another feminine form of leadership (Dager, 1994). Hagopian and Wilson (1996) explain:

To begin with, it assumes that what works for women will work for men. Even worse, it assumes, without any biblical proof, that what is the case with women should be the case for men. Because women are comfortable getting together and chatting, Promise Keepers assumes that the same should be true for men. In this way, Promise Keepers uncritically adopts a feminine model of relationships flowing from the relationship-orientation of women, and makes that feminine model normative for men (p. 55).

Aside from its observation of the is/ought conflation, this passage is important in that it constitutes a challenge to Promise Keepers to make evident its authority for a model its opposition considers unbiblical.

Generally, internal opposition portrays Promise Keepers as being too soft in its approach to male leadership (a charge in direct contradiction with that of its external opposition). From this point of view, while "headship" is certainly not a dictatorship, neither is it a democracy. Further complicating the issue are the
apparently conflicting claims of Promise Keepers' own spokesmen. Bill McCartney has expressed his solution to the problem of gender-based authority by calling for men to "rule alongside" their wives (Hagopian and Wilson, 1996).

On the other hand, Promise Keepers author, Tony Evans, asserts that men must "take back" their positions of authority in the home and church (Evans, 1994, p. 79). The problem of gender and authority in Promise Keepers will be taken up in greater detail in this chapter's section on external opposition. For the present, it is enough to recognize that the problem is a significant one for evangelicals, and one whose solution admits of no clear evangelical consensus.

A second charge against Promise Keepers stems from its implementation of principles and practices germane to psychology. Martin and Deidre Bobgan (1994), for instance, charge Promise Keepers with vitiating the gospel through an unscriptural alliance with "secular" psychology. These critics note the tendency by some Promise Keepers' authors which tend to identify "sin" with psychological notions of "compulsive" or "addictive" behavior, low "self-esteem" and other causes rooted in one's childhood. The problem, according to the Bobgan's, is not merely an exchange of
surface grammar, but an heretical reduction of what the concept of sin is and does according to the orthodox Christian tradition.

Reconstituting sin under the rubric of compulsion or addiction locates the problem entirely within the realm of human experience, as opposed to human nature, one whose cure is to be found in a decisive act of the human will. The scriptural mandate for a "saving grace" is thus either marginalized or altogether obviated. In essence, this psychologizing of the gospel results in an inordinate preoccupation with man's "unhealthy" self, and the so-called rational mechanisms for its amelioration, as against focusing on the nature of God and the mechanism of faith in his already accomplished work.

The most fervent attacks related to the charge of psychoheresy came in response to Promise Keepers' endorsement and distribution of The Masculine Journey, a collaborative effort by pastoral theologian Robert Hick's, Promise Keepers, and NavPress. In the main, the text was designed to promote a Christian view of masculinity. Its guiding premise, a variant of that which fueled the secular men's movements of the late 20th century, stated that much of contemporary society's ills can be traced to an absence of social norms and practices which have historically given men a clear and privileged sense of
their identity in the social order. The book was meant to identify and ameliorate the conditions which have contributed to this problem.

The text was distributed free of charge to the men in attendance at a Promise Keepers' stadium event at Boulder, Colorado, in 1993 (Bobgan & Bobgan, 1994). It received enthusiastic endorsement from Promise Keepers' speakers and authors. Dallas Theological Seminary professor Howard Hendricks called it an "eye-opening key to understanding the Bible's teaching on what it means to be a man" (The Masculine Journey Study Guide, back cover). Popular evangelical author and Christian psychologist John Trent (1993) averred:

Whether you're a young man, defining yourself by your strength; in middle age fighting to correct priorities; or in your latter years, seeking to stay the course the Masculine Journey offers wisdom and encouragement (The Masculine Journey Study Guide, back cover).

Recommendations from some of evangelicalism's more populist voices notwithstanding, evangelical critics characterized Hick's treatment of masculinity as a heretical mix of Christian and secular psychological ideas. Owing to its humanistic worldview, psychology, in general, is viewed with considerable suspicion by those within the fundamentalist and reformed wings of evangelicalism. The term of "psychoheresy" has been employed against proponents of Christian psychology, and
refers to an unscriptural synthesis of secular psychological theories and counseling practices with orthodox Christianity (Bobgan & Bobgan, 1996, p. 3).

With respect to this charge, a negative strategy of identification is evident in the opposition's attempt to link Promise Keepers' ideology with a given psychological author, tenet, or worldview. Martin and Deidre Bobgan (1994), for instance, note that although Hicks "dismisses [Carl] Jung and others at the beginning of his book...Jungian notions [nevertheless] float through the book on the backs of the authors he quotes, and they are incorporated into his own explanations" (p. 4).

Elsewhere the Bobgans cite various critical perspectives on psychology which argue that "theories of human nature reflect the theorists's personality as he or she externalizes it or projects it onto humanity at large" (Riebel cited in Bobgan & Bobgan, 1994, p. 3). The Bobgans then target Hick's book as one "not fully based on the Bible," but rather on arbitrary, personal experience" (p. 4).

Sarah Leslie's (1995) criticisms of Promise Keepers' small groups follows the same strategy of identification. Leslie notes that Promise Keepers has adopted the ideas in Hick's book to authorize the "largely discredited encounter group model" popular in the 1970's (p. 1). The model, whose dictum of "getting in touch with one's
feelings" became an American cultural epithet, was abandoned by secular psychology because of the devastation it wreaked on people's lives. According to Leslie, the psychological practices entailed in the encounter group model exposed participants to intense feelings of personal anguish leading to a general breakdown in one's value orientation and, in some cases, more acute forms of depression. The model failed to provide the requisite means by which subjects could reintegrate their shattered psyche's back into the real world, and therefore exacerbated the very problem it was supposed to solve.

The controversy surrounding The Masculine Journey eventually led Promise Keepers to discontinue its marketing and distribution and subsequently to issue a formal policy statement regarding its contents:

Several passages in The Masculine Journey by Robert Hicks (1993, NavPress) could be understood in more than one way. This led to controversies that neither the author nor Promise Keepers could have foreseen, and which have proven to be a distraction from the focus of our ministry. Portions of the book prompted a wide range of interpretations and responses involving theological issues which Promise Keepers does not feel a mission or calling to resolve...Controversy surrounding the book also led to a marked decline in demand among our constituents, further defeating its purpose as a PK resource... At the same time, we believe Mr. Hicks' core theology is consistent with orthodox evangelical Christianity, and that The Masculine Journey was a forthright attempt on his part to deal with male issues from a biblical context (Promise Keepers, 1996, online).
The policy statement is important rhetorically in that it represents one of the few times that Promise Keepers has directly addressed its internal opposition. Points of interest include the acknowledgement that the text's contents are open to a "wide range of interpretations and responses" and the characterization of the controversy as a "theological distraction."

On the one hand, Promise Keepers evidences a clear interest identifying its ideology with a core theology that is "consistent with orthodox Christianity." On the other hand, it dismisses claims which challenge that identification as being theological and beyond their "calling." The attempt is thus made to appropriate the credibility of the title of orthodoxy while eschewing the theological accountability entailed therein.

Whether Promise Keepers can consistently maintain a semblance of consistency in this regard has remained, to date, a non issue for its constituency. That Promise Keepers can, in good conscience, continue to dismiss these claims as being out of bounds is understood metaphorically in the characterization of its rhetoric as offensively-minded. As long as its constituency sees Promise Keepers as "moving forward" and "on the attack," Promise Keepers has little reason to assume a defensive posture. More pragmatically, this particular case indicates that Promise
Keepers' need only respond to its critics charges when that controversy has been sufficiently kindled to the point of declining sales or attendance figures.

Finally, internal opposition charges Promise Keepers with a kind of "dangerous ecumenicalism" (or inclusivism) which threatens to subjugate God's will for his chosen elect. This line of attack is particularly prominent within the fundamentalist or separatist wings of evangelicalism. These interest communities have historically viewed large scale revivalisms with considerable suspicion. Old school fundamentalists of Charles D. Finney's day, for instance, characterized his revivals as creating "mere animal excitements," branding Finney himself as "the madman of Oneida (Rosell, 1984, p.136).

Oppositional rhetoric of the separatist variety, while polemic, is firmly grounded in a particular evangelical tradition which claims as its roots the enlightened emancipation of the Calvinian Reformation (Marsden, 1991; McLoughlin, 1959). The various Calvinist, fundamentalist, and Reformed churches that sprinkle the American religious landscape are highly doctrinal in orientation and rhetorically militant in their effort to preserve the primacy of the local church (Marsden, 1991).
It is not surprising, therefore, that these critics view the very idea of Christian unity, on a national or global level, with considerable suspicion.

Citing Promise Keepers' "ecumenical emphasis" and "charismatic aura" the Fellowship of Fundamental Bible Churches passed a resolution urging Christians to "be wise, to be warned, and to beware of this false movement" (cited in Andrews, 1996). Cloud (1994) argues that those who are influenced by Promise Keepers will "not be taught to keep themselves pure from apostasy and heresy" but instead "will be instructed in unscriptural ecumenism; they will be taught that doctrine is not crucial, that to fight for the truth is unspiritual." The Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America passed an official resolution which stated:

We THEREFORE RESOLVE and do hereby encourage pastors and laymen to take a clear stand and reject any participation with Promise Keepers lest God's command against compromise be dishonored and churches succumb to ecumenism (Resolution on Promise Keepers, 1995, online).

This rhetoric is indicative of a view inimical to the very idea of a unified evangelical front. A negative strategy of identification is evidenced in the attempt to align Promise Keepers with the interests and practices of other evangelical movements and movement-organizations, charismatic in nature, which are understood as emphasizing religious experience over doctrinal accuracy. Not
coincidentally, there has been a marked increase in charismatic and pentecostal churches and belief systems throughout the Northern hemisphere in the latter quarter of the twentieth century. The relationship between church size and religious ideology is one which some evangelical groups are taking quite seriously, one to which a rhetoric of doctrinal integrity is perhaps only a surface indicator of a much more serious concern. More will be said of this shortly.

In order to get an insider's view of the rhetorical dynamics that occur between these competing interest communities as concerns the charge of ecumenicalism, I have included a copy of an e-mail exchange between individuals who occupy lay positions within their respective evangelical camps. The participants in the exchange identify themselves as "Robert McDaniel," a Promise Keeper and "Robin Kalhorn," a fundamentalist. The message was uploaded in sections to the online journal Balaam's Ass just prior to Promise Keepers' Washington D.C. rally. What follows is the e-mail dialogue. The voices in the discourse are labeled according to interest communities which each represents.

PK: On October 4, 1997 many hundreds of thousands of men will gather on the capital mall in Washington, DC to do one thing and that is repent.
Opp: Repent of what? Their refusal to "let the walls come down" between biblical Christianity and apostasy. Their refusal to let the so-called revelations of human leaders replace the Bible as their source of truth. This refusal is a virtue, not a sin.

PK: Repent of their sin, repent of their father's sin, repent of their nations' sin.

Opp: I am responsible for no sins but my own, Robert. To take the blame for another man's wickedness is to LIE [sic], both to God and man. It is no better than claiming innocence when I am truly guilty. Most important: when Jesus died on the cross, sin was crucified with Him. His atoning death and resurrection has washed away the iniquities of all who believe in Him. There is no biblical provision for the existence of Promise Keepers as a redeemer. By the way, I am a Dutchman by birth. Do you wish me to go to the capital of the United States to repent of the sins of Holland?

PK: (See Nehemiah 1 and 9 for a biblical reference). In the pattern of 2 Chronicles 7:14 repentance, humility and turning toward God will take place. It is God who has ordained this time.

Opp: It is Bill McCartney and Randy Phillips who have ordained this time. THEY told you to do this, not God. Aren't you the slightest bit suspicious that Bill and Randy lean so much on the Old Testament? Christians are not national Israel, and are NOT [sic] governed by its laws.

PK: It is His desire for His people to return to Him. Promise Keepers is the tool he is using to accomplish this. They have been called for one purpose and that is to call the men of America to repentance.

Opp: Can you provide even ONE [sic] New Testament scripture to substantiate this claim?

PK: If they attempt to do anything further God will have His way.

Opp: Promise Keepers WILL attempt to do further things, my friend, and you have sworn oaths to help them. No matter what your leaders call on
you to do, they will always say, "This is of God." Millions of Christians have been butchered under this slogan, especially by the Roman Catholic Church. And it is to Rome that your leaders are selling you.

PK: Join with the men in Washington, DC.

Opp: Never. Not if my physical life depended on it.

PK: See for yourself what God would do. Ask Him to show you His ways and what He desires to accomplish. Remember He is God and He can do whatever He desires.

Opp: I get this already from the Holy Bible and prayer. Nothing else is required. Nothing else is permissible.

PK: Join with other men and repent of your sin, the sin of your father's and the sins of our nation. Become part of His solution rather than the problem. Ask God to heal this nation.

Opp: So, Christians who refuse to join PK are a "problem"? How do your leaders intend to "solve" this "problem"? If "healing the nation" means doing away with the "problem", you had better gird yourself to persecute me, or be persecuted by your PK "brothers."

PK: Consider your ways. Ask God what He desires. He will tell you if you earnestly seek His face.

Opp: No thanks, Robert. I'll stick to God's word, which is complete and infallible. Please make every effort yourself to measure PK's teachings against the Bible. Don't let them drag you into spiritual slavery. And if they hold out a sword to you and say, "Take it, Robert. Smite those who will not join the National Reawakening", REFUSE IT! [sic] Though it mean the loss of all your friends, your freedom, and your life, do not take it! For the sword of persecution has two edges, and if you should swing it at PK's enemies, you will only end up hacking yourself to pieces (Kalhorn, 1997a, online).
The central issue under consideration is whether or not Promise Keepers' Stand in the Gap Rally should be attended by all "Christians." On the whole, McDaniel's statements are invitational in character, a point made all the more explicit in his call to "join with the men in Washington, DC." Kalhorn's response constitutes a rejection of this invitation. Both men employ various strategies of identification in the discourse, and it is to these strategies I now turn.

First, McDaniel's inclusion of the phrase "many hundreds of thousands of men will gather" is consistent with Promise Keepers' tendency to identify its religious authority with large attendance figures. It is interesting to note that Promise Keepers' leaders were emphatic in their decision not to offer any official estimates of the crowd size. While it is not entirely clear as to why this was the case, the choice can be seen as a counter-strategy designed to offset the numbers game charge of its critics.

Second, McDaniel's invitation attempts to reduce the religious grounds required for assent to the singular purpose of repentance. This reduction allows McDaniel to employ a second strategy of identification in the use of scriptural implants. 2 Chronicles 7:14 states:

> if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.
The implant is employed as a contemporary mandate for national corporate repentance. Nehemiah 1 and 9 are similar in thrust. These chapters contain individual and corporate prayers of confession and invocations for God's mercy on the nation of Israel. The implants provide a further point of identification by associating the nation of Israel, the land of God's promise, with America. Thus on the issue of corporate repentance, McDaniel's use of scriptural implants means to identify his invitation as consistent with biblical truth, the content of his claim with Old Testament biblical content advocating such an event, and the authority for his claim as coming directly from God.

Kalhorn's response uses several negative strategies of identification to reject McDaniel's invitation. Interestingly, his primary strategy can be viewed as an attempt to undermine the third level of operation in the scriptural implant strategy. Note that Kalhorn presents his argument in terms of a dichotomy: The authority for the event is either a product of divine origin or human origin. So framed, Kalhorn identifies the religious authority as the "so-called revelations of human leaders" and further identifies Bill McCartney and Randy Phillips as evidence of the event's human origins. In this polemic, no provision is granted for the possibility of both God and man being joint contributors to the process.
Kalhorn's strategy represents a somewhat curious, if widespread, tendency in fundamentalism to eschew human agency altogether in God's work. In a related piece of discourse, fundamentalist Gil Rugh responds to Promise Keepers' claim that Christian men of America can provide the explosive momentum needed to help America achieve God's purposes for this generation by saying that God will "achieve his purposes for this nation regardless of what the men do" (Rugh, 1994).

This oppositional claim has its roots in the idea of God's absolute sovereignty in bringing all things to pass according to his divine will. It is an idea to which all evangelicals, including fundamentalists, subscribe in some measure. This application of it, however, fails to recognize the idea that God almost always chooses human agents to accomplish His will on earth, including the recording of the very Scriptures to which evangelicals, including fundamentalists, so tenaciously hold.

To argue that divine revelation is "required" and "permissible" only within the parameters of "the Holy Bible" and "prayer" is, in the former case, to undermine any post-biblical work that God may do (or be doing) and in the latter case to brand as illegitimate sources of revelation all prayers which claim biblical inspiration for their authority, aside from those of the fundamentalist variety. These considerations aside,
Kalhorn's strategy works by denying Promise Keepers' divine mandate to speak for God through the identification of the event's authority as strictly human in origin.

Kalhorn also employs a second strategy designed to negate McDaniel's claim to authority. Specifically, Kalhorn attempts to bifurcate the Bible into two domains of authority, one which privileges the New over the Old Testament. This move contains a hidden point of identification with the New Testament's notion of the "new covenant" between God and man. Here, the New Testament's concern with grace is understood to replace the Old Testament's emphasis on the Law. The implanting of Old Testament Scripture is thereby understood as an identification with the very system of laws which precluded "gentiles," or all non-Jews, from possessing any authority to speak for God. It is by means of this tacit identification that Kalhorn reduces the authority and influence of the Old Testament and with it, Promise Keepers' authority to speak for God in sanctioning the Gap event.

A third negative strategy targets the movement aspect, per se, of Promise Keepers. This strategy works by identifying historically-situated movements whose ideology and practices have led to the spiritual corruption of the Church and at worst the very destruction of the true believer. The move is then made analogically to show how
Promise Keepers, as a movement, contains similar ideologies and practices. In the above discourse, the opposition targets Catholicism as the movement of choice. Turning the numbers game back on Promise Keepers, Kalhorn points out that "millions of Christians have been butchered...by the Roman Catholic Church" under the so-called authority of God.

Fundamentalist pastor Gil Rugh (1994) uses a similar strategy when he states:

There is great danger when we begin to decide to unite about moral issues, social issues, political issues. Those things divert us from the focal attention of the word of God. The charismatic movement was very effective in uniting those who professed to believe in Jesus Christ and have [sic] a common experience in the Holy Spirit...All of our doctrinal differences were to be seen as not significant as long as we professed Jesus Christ and experienced his Spirit.

And,

The psychology movement that has overtaken and infiltrated the Church....unify Christians on the basis of their psychological influence which...[does not] come from scripture. [Eventually] we begin to think maybe there is something to this. As long as we agree about Christ and you say 'yes, we have to believe in Christ' and I say 'we have to believe in Christ and we say we both want to be godly people, and even though we don't agree on the other things we should...unite.

Gil's remarks were captured on tape and have been distributed by fundamentalists in their crusade against Promise Keepers. In that tape, Rugh prefaces his remarks with a scriptural implant taken from the Old Testament book of Ezekiel, 33:30 which reads:
And they come to you as my people come and sit before you as my people and hear your words but they do not do them. For they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouths and their heart goes after their gain.

In this, not only is the attempt made to identify Promise Keepers and its followers with the apostate believers, but it is done by reference to the Old Testament. It seems, then, that the choice to use the Old or New Testament has as much to do with immediate exigencies of the situation as it does with any alleged changing of the guard.

This macro-level strategy of identification surfaces repeatedly in discourse opposing Promise Keepers' ecumenicalism, and is perhaps the most telling indication of how threatening some evangelicals believe that Promise Keepers is to local church autonomy and power. In this view, threats to local (smaller) power bases generally come from larger movements which gain power through the oppressive assimilation of smaller units. Skepticism about whether this evangelical polemic is really about power should consider Rugh's further exhortation to his congregation when he states that his concerns about Promise Keepers' ecumenicalism should be evaluated "in light of...what the scripture says and decide accordingly" (Rugh, 1994). Rugh then immediately follows this statement with "let me warn you the instruction of scripture is follow your leaders (Rugh, 1994, emp. mine)."
The most radical macro-level strategy of identification, however, is seen in the opposition's use of the Nazi movement. Promise Keepers' emphasis on reclaiming the soul of America, say its opponents, bears much in common with Nazism, which, under pretense of "national interest" culminated in a general redistribution of religious power and authority within Germany, subjugating all units of local church authority in its wake.

Furthering contextualization the issue in terms of power, Kalhorn states that Promise Keepers is beginning to "take over groups of churches on the level of towns, and even entire counties" (Kalhorn, 1997b, online). Elsewhere, Promise Keepers' use of the term "national awakening" is identified as a code term for Nazi-like nationalism (Kalhorn, 1997b, online). And,

The kid gloves are coming off! Like the German Nazis who boasted, 'Today Germany, tomorrow the world,' Promise Keepers is beginning to speak of global power, even as it lays claim to the destiny of the United States (Kalhorn, 1997b, online).

Kalhorn (1997b) goes on to provide a point by point comparison between Promise Keepers and Nazism, noting that both subscribe to the "Leader Principle" (or "Fuehrerprinzip") wherein a hierarchically-organized and undemocratically-appointed group of grass roots leaders (Key Men, Ambassadors) form a chain of command all the way up to the central "headquarters." Oath swearing ("Eid") to
vows of secrecy, the creation of a "folk theology" or "new faith" which modifies Christianity into a "nation saving force," the use of military metaphors in language and art, and the mass rallies where men are "goaded into emotional frenzy by fiery orators and stirring music" are present in both movements, notes Kalhorn (1997b). Even the Promise Keepers' New Testament is held up for suspicion on account of its red, white, and black tri-color scheme, the very same one used in the Nazi flag!

The efficacy of this strategy depends upon an audience's willingness to make a series of additional, perhaps unconscious, leaps of association, filling in the remaining evidential gaps in the opposition's argument. The strategy, for instance, implies that Bill McCartney is a kind of Hitler. As Promise Keepers' chief spokesman, no other single individual would logically fit the role. Identificational leaps of motive and purpose must also be made. The strategy requires audiences to infer that Promise Keepers' leaders have a hidden agenda, perhaps political in nature. Promise Keepers is thus characterized as a more or less covert attempt on the part of its leaders to lead its unsuspecting but thoroughly indoctrinated followers into a holy war against the true believers in Christ. This point is graphically illustrated in Kalhorn's castigating remark that "the sword of
persecution has two edges, and if you should swing it at PK's enemies, you will only end up hacking yourself to pieces" (Kalhorn, 1997b, online).

Another way of viewing this strategy is temporally. That is, its force depends upon the audience's willingness to make a series of nonlinear leaps between past and future to create an identity in the present moment. Put another way, the strategy works by creating a temporal experience in which an imagined future is superimposed upon an actuated present and held together by a corrupted past. In this it may well be called a temporal strategy of identification. Like Nazism and pre-Reformation Catholicism (past) Promise Keepers will turn out to be an oppressive, tyrannical force against the true Church (future) because that is what it really is (present).

The strategy is absolutist in its polemic. There is no middle ground. The opposition has created a chasm which cannot be bridged by changes in ideology or practice, however significant. Nor does it seems probable that contemporary movement-organizations of any kind would be able to sustain themselves absent the characteristics that Promise Keepers' opposition denigrates. Indeed, to make the sort of changes required by its opposition would result in the loss of their identity as movement-organization.
Finally, and underlying the various discourses above is the metaphor of Christ's body. Although its use of military language and identification strategies do signify the opposition's concern with power, the most potent strategy in their discourse may well be found in the attempt to undermine the means by which Promise Keepers attempts to position itself within the body. Macro-level strategies of identification also carry force in this attempt. Neither Nazis nor Roman Catholics are granted the privilege of being in the body. To the extent that Promise Keepers can be identified with these and other like-situated groups is the extent to which their function in the body is discredited, and in the most extreme, their place in it altogether eliminated.

External Opposition

Given its identity as a male movement-organization, it is expected that Promise Keepers would give rise to gender-specific criticism. Indeed, much of the order's external opposition focuses on the issue of gender relations. In this section, I will limit my treatment of external opposition to that of feminist criticism with a view toward discovering the identification and metaphoric strategies used therein. Where relevant, I will also discuss Promise Keepers' response to these criticisms.
Finally, I will pro-offer some strategies which have largely been absent from feminist opposition but which, if implemented, might help in advancing their cause.

Measured in terms of popular exposure, The National Organization for Women (hereinafter NOW) has been the most successful among Promise Keepers' feminist critics at gaining a public hearing. This is evidenced, for instance, in media coverage of Promise Keepers' national rally in Washington D.C., which typically featured interviews with NOW representatives alongside those of Promise Keepers' spokespersons. NOW's oppositional efforts are detailed in its "Promise Keepers Mobilization Project," a systematic program of "action plans and ideas" aimed at ensuring that, at the least, its voice will remain part of the ongoing public conversation (NOW, 1997, online). Much of these efforts call for an extensive use of mass media resources and include letter writing campaigns to local newspaper editors, coordinated press conferences with pro-feminist and other progressive activist groups, call-ins to local radio talk shows, and stock in trade protest demonstrations at Promise Keepers' events.

Ideologically, NOW has consistently framed its opposition against Promise Keepers in terms of power, a point represented in its characterization of Promise Keepers' D.C. rally as a "national show of strength," (Ireland, et al., 1997, online). So framed, NOW's rhetoric
shares an unlikely alliance with fundamentalist and other separatist groups who have similarly framed their rhetoric, albeit with a different ideological focus. While internal opposition often takes issue with Promise Keepers' influence upon the Church, NOW's characterization typically portrays Promise Keepers as a threat to social progress generally, and of female autonomy and independence in particular.

Within NOW's rhetoric may be discerned several negative strategies of identification. Its most frequently occurring strategy seeks to identify Promise Keepers with other large scale movements, organizations, and their leaders whose ideology has resulted in the dis-empowerment of society's underprivileged, under-represented classes. For instance, Promise Keepers co-founder and chief spokesman Bill McCartney has been identified with such right-wing extremists as the violent anti-abortion group, Operation Rescue and Colorado for Family Values, a group that fought for legislation to deprive lesbian and gays of their civil rights in Colorado" (Ireland et al., 1997, online).

NOW's rhetoric also characterizes Promise Keepers' leadership as being in league with such figures as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, James Dobson, Gary Bauer, and Randall Terry. Along the way, the predictable array of stock ideographs, "homophobic," "misogynist," "patriarchal," "male-supremacist," "racist," "sexist," and
"anti-woman" are employed in the rhetorical cause (Ireland, 1997, online; Recer, 1995, online). The strategy is designed to portray Promise Keepers as part of a monolithic "evil" empire whose central organizing terms include the "radical right," "religious right" and "radical religious right." This macro-level strategy shares much in common with that of fundamentalists. By it, both oppositional forces attempt to minimize or altogether eliminate differences of principle and practice between Promise Keepers and allied parties.

Perhaps in deference to some pro-feminist sympathizers who have criticized NOW's polemic as unduly reactionary (e.g., Stodghill, 1997), NOW president Patricia Ireland has publicly conceded some common ground with Promise Keepers in the idea of men taking "more responsibility for their families and in their communities" (Ireland, 1997, online; Ireland et al., 1997, online). NOW has also given limited acknowledgement to the genuine motivation of Promise Keepers' followers, however naive it may be.

Herein a second strategy may be discerned in NOW's bifurcation of leaders and followers. As with fundamentalist rhetoric, NOW develops a case for the "hidden agenda" of Promise Keepers' leaders, as evidenced in its characterization of the order as a "stealth male-supremicist group" (Ireland et al., 1997, online).
McCartney, is particularly singled out for his "notorious homophobia" and "legendary misogyny" (Recer, 1995, online). By casting a suspicious eye toward the "true motives" of Promise Keepers' leaders, the attempt is made to equate their identity with the identity of the whole movement-organization, while yet preserving a measure of integrity on the part of its (misguided) followers.

Substantively, NOW's primary line of attack centers what Promise Keepers "really means" by calling men to assume "responsibility." NOW Vice President Elizabeth Toledo warns that "in exchange for men doing the right thing, being good fathers and members of the community and good spouses, that women are to accept a role of submission" (Toledo, cited in Cooperman, 1997, online). The concerns of NOW and other pro-feminist sympathizers thus turn on Promise Keepers' treatment of gender relations, particularly as concerns the question of authority. In speaking to this issue, Clatterbaugh (1997) contends that Promise Keepers' view of the problem is based on the concept of the misuse of male authority. On the other hand, says Clatterbaugh, liberal feminism advocates "marriage without leadership or marriage in which leadership is decided upon those involved" (p. 183).

NOW's rhetoric seems to deny any possibility of gender constituting the grounds for relational authority. As NOW Vice President Rosemary Dempsey (1997) states:
You cannot say to one whole group of people, because of their gender, that they are God-ordained to be in charge. Whenever you give that kind of authority, even if you pepper it with benevolence, that absolute authority will be abused (online).

On the other hand, the phrase "that kind of authority" suggests a reading that does not necessarily impugn gender-based authority per se, but rather the kind of authority which grants men the final say in gender relations. This reading would leave room for a gender-based authority that is negotiable rather than absolute. Thus, the question of authority partly hinges on the kind of authority NOW sees Promise Keepers as advocating.

For its part, Promise Keepers has consistently adopted a reconcilliative posture in addressing the issue of gender-based authority. Variations on the metaphor of servant consistently appear in Promise Keepers' rhetoric. Initially, at least, it is not females who are asked to fulfill a servile role, but rather males.

Promise Keepers' literature and stadium speeches exhort men to assume an attitude of humility in making full confession of their failures as husbands and fathers and to adopt a correspondingly penitent, respectful disposition in (re)assuming positions of leadership in the home. At some stadium events, men were asked to wash one another's feet as a way of providing a concrete experience to the concept of servanthood. In this, Promise Keepers employed a strategy of identification with a famous
episode in the New Testament in which Jesus washed the feet of his disciples to show them the meaning of "true leadership." The idea is that in order to lead, one must serve. And in order to lead well, one must serve humbly.

The call for humble reconciliation receives perhaps its most compelling if economically infeasible example in Bill McCartney who left a lucrative coaching job to devote more time to his wife (McCartney, 1996). This example probably gets much mileage from audiences who likely associate McCartney's actions with the New Testament passage in Ephesians 5:25 calling for husbands to give up nothing less than their "whole lives" in service to their wives. Indeed, at nearly every turn Promise Keepers' attempts to present a model for male-female relations is designed to meet the most pressing concerns of feminism, a point not lost on some feminist observers (Minkowitz, 1995; Stodghill, 1997; Terwilliger, 1996, online).

Still, Promise Keepers is far from clear on this position. This is partly due to the fact that its rhetoric comes from a number of different voices who do not seem to be in complete agreement among themselves. Depending upon who is speaking, it is possible to read Promise Keepers' concept of gender-based authority as either absolute or negotiable in nature, or alternatively, as both absolute and negotiable. More will be said of this shortly.
NOW's rhetoric constitutes a flat rejection of the servant model. Rhetorically, this rejection involves replacing the very terms for authority used by Promise Keepers with those which play off of the notions of "power" entailed in the servant metaphor. Thus NOW employs terms such as "heads and masters of the family" "male domination" "submission of women" and "taking control" in an effort to locate Promise Keepers' notion of gender-based authority in the realm of the absolute. Thus, even if some negotiation is possible, it only occurs within the over-arching framework of absolutism. It is the male who dictates the terms and conditions of whatever negotiation may be available.

This apparent transmutation is further aided by NOW's insistence that audiences examine the "real story" behind Promise Keepers. In this way, Promise Keepers' metaphor of servanthood is countered by a metaphoric strategy which dichotomizes surface appearance from the underlying reality. Promise Keepers is thus portrayed as a kind of covert or stealth operation whose goal is all too clear for those who choose to look deeply enough.

In further support of this effort NOW has seized upon a single passage (from a single text) published by Promise Keepers. Indeed the passage has received a lion's share of the attention by critics who question the order's brand of gender-based authority (Abraham, 1997; Clatterbaugh, 1997;
Ireland et al., 1997, online; Recer, 1995, online) The passage occurs in the Promise Keeper text the Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper:

The first thing you do is sit down with your wife and say something like this: "Honey, I've made a terrible mistake. I've given you my role. I gave up leading this family, and I forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim that role." Don't misunderstand what I'm saying here. I'm not suggesting that you ask for your role back, I'm urging you to take it back. If you simply ask for it, your wife is likely to say, "Look, for the last ten years, I've had to raise these kids, look after the house, and pay the bills. I've had to get a job and still keep up my duties in the home. I've had to do my job and yours. You think I'm just going to turn everything back over to you?" Your wife's concerns are justified. Unfortunately, however, there can be no compromise here. If you're going to lead, you must lead. Be sensitive. Listen. Treat the lady gently and lovingly. But lead! (Evans, 1994, pp. 79-80).

For NOW, the passage is taken to be an explanation of "how men must dominate women" (Recer, 1995, online) and a prescription for marriage that "helps husbands regain the power they've relinquished" (Terwilliger, 1996, online). Thus, NOW's rhetoric is largely a reaction against what it sees as a prescription for absolute male authority.

One problem underlying this debate concerns the relative levels of rhetorical abstraction on which it occurs. Clearly, external opposition is given to debating the issue on a level of abstraction (i.e., "power" and "authority") in which the day to day concrete manifestations of these abstractions have become, ironically, subservient. Yet, Promise Keepers' literature
does contain a number of concrete applications of its concept of authority, rendered in narrative form, that present a different reading of the relationship between gender and authority.

Many of the stories found in Promise Keepers' text *The Power of a Promise Kept* revolve around males whose guilty consciences have caused them to alter their lifestyles in ways that conform to their wives' expectations. Thus one finds a number of stories revolving around the problem of "workaholism" which are resolved by a husband's decision to spend more time at home. These stories are held up as examples of how men should "serve" their wives.

Alternatively, these examples, however, could also be read as situations in which the needs of the women have dictated what men should do. In this view, it is the females, or more precisely their expectations, that actually have a kind of final or absolute authority. Alternatively, of course, they could also be read as men who, already given final authority, are merely acting in ways consistent with its benevolent use. The point to be taken here, however, is that Promise Keepers' position on gender-based authority is far from clear, particularly when discussions move to a lower level of abstraction. Given its concrete examples, it seems possible that negotiation and/or absolutism could conceivably take
precedence. Consequently the relationship between gender and authority may be more situationally-determined than NOW understands or Promise Keepers may want to admit.

A further indication of this ambiguity surfaces in the testimony of the women indirectly affected by it -- the wives of Promise Keepers. Dr. LaRae Kemp, a wife of a Promise Keeper (and mother of seven children) avers that her husband became involved with Promise Keepers at her request. "I am equal in all the decisions that are made," Kemp states, adding that "he may make the final decision, but [her] influence will influence his decision" (cited in Cooperman, 1997, online). Kemp goes on to add, however:

I am not submissive at all. I think the relationship between my husband and I, with Christ at the center, has allowed me the sanctuary to spread my wings and do what I wanted to do and fulfill me as a wife and mother, and more importantly, as a woman. I think my career has shown that (cited in Cooperman, 1997, online).

The statement is suggestive of a strong sense of (female) identity, not one that is at all given to servile dependence. She is a non-submissive equal who evidently carries enough authority to ensure that her needs for self-actualization are met, needs which extend well beyond the household to include a fulfilling professional career. Even if this statement is contextualized within her

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husband's final authority, it can hardly be seen as unfriendly to, or incompatible with, the primary goals of mainstream feminism.

While this kind of glowing testimony is corroborated by the testimony of many Promise Keeper wives, their testimony is likely a strategic response by Promise Keepers to feminist charges of male-domination. The testimonies suggest that, in the long run, questions regarding gender-based authority make little difference when females are getting what they want. Indeed, power is usually exercised for the purpose of getting what one wants.

From this point of view, NOW's opposition, however well-founded, does little to serve the interests of those not already firmly committed to the view that male authority, in any form, constitutes a serious threat to their well-being. As has been pointed out, some pro-feminist sympathizers have already criticized the polemic nature of NOW's discourse, a problem which could move it away from the concerns of mainstream feminism thereby contributing unwittingly to its own loss of power. This is to say that whatever force NOW's rhetoric may have, it is unlikely to be persuasive to many pro-feminist audiences, among whom may certainly be counted evangelical females.
I would like to suggest several alternative strategies available to NOW which would serve the purpose of keeping it in the mainstream of feminist thought concerning Promise Keepers. It should be kept in mind that media coverage of Promise Keepers has been largely supportive in tone and shallow in substance (Claussen, 1996). Consequently, many audiences are relatively uninformed about Promise Keepers' position on the issue of gender-based authority, while yet holding a favorable view of the movement-organization in general.

Given this, NOW would benefit from a rhetoric pressing Promise Keepers for clarity and detail, thereby forcing audiences to think about Promise Keepers in a more critical manner. In addition, a "common sense" rhetoric could potentially place NOW in an area of rational authority traditionally associated with masculinity. Failure to address common sense opposition could be viewed as a failure in that aspect of masculinity that Promise Keepers so heartily encourages.

As an "outsider" to evangelicalism, NOW has the advantage of being relatively unencumbered by some of the rhetorical strategies used by Promise Keepers against its internal critics. Promise Keepers has dismissed some internal opposition with statements suggesting that its detractors are too caught up in matters of theology. Promise Keepers' rhetoric also suggests that at its
religious detractors are really not part of God's chosen team. Strategies which play off of the metaphor of Christ's body, however, are not likely to hold any influence over audiences for whom theology holds little meaning, still less any interest, and understand their "team" as being of altogether different kind.

First, insofar as Promise Keepers has aligned itself with a history of evangelical awakenings and revivals, NOW would do well to question the movement-organization's ability to effect long-term positive change in the social order. Evangelical movements are fairly notorious for producing radical, short term change. Ironically, the portion of the passage from the Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper cited above consistently omitted from NOW's rhetoric is the one that calls for a wait and see approach on the part of women. Translated in terms of this rhetorical analysis, the approach calls for a temporal strategy of identification that redefines "the good" by locating it in a more distant future rather than in the immediate present. In this, testimony on the part of Promise Keepers wives would become a matter of ongoing speculation rather than short term resolution. By questioning the long term effects of its rhetoric, the burden is thus placed on Promise Keepers' own titular term of commitment, and in view of evangelicalism's history, one that is unlikely to be overcome.

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Second, the fact that Promise Keepers targets gender relationships which extend beyond the home to include "our communities and our nation," indirectly commits it to explaining how the relationships between gender and authority play out in these contexts. Indeed, the question of whether or not gender-based authority can be contextualized is one Promise Keepers has consistently ignored. What does Promise Keepers believe about female authority figures in the workplace? Would Promise Keepers be in favor of female ordination in the Church? Could the wife of a Promise Keeper expect to receive support from her husband should she decide to run for political office?

These kinds of questions could force Promise Keepers into a defensive position it has historically been quite reluctant to occupy. As has already been pointed out, the character of Promise Keepers' rhetoric, like the philosophy of "Coach Mac," consistently privileges a "rhetoric of offense." Most importantly, however, the focus on gender relationships which occur outside the home would help audiences to recognize that any rhetoric which seeks to influence the social order has necessary consequences for gender relationships which occur at all levels and contexts within that order. The rhetorical turn in this strategy is thus found in calling into question
Promise Keepers' foundational premise which reduces social problems to the loss of masculine authority in the home and church.

Third, insofar as Promise Keepers consistently frames its rhetoric in terms of absolute truth -- as opposed to power -- a compelling rational opposition would question the authority by which Promise Keepers claims to speak for God in revealing this truth. Since the final authority for such truth claims will come from the Bible, feminist criticism might benefit from counter scriptural implant strategies which draw attention to Promise Keepers' own rhetorical management of Scripture. As the biblical passages which headline this chapter suggest, the Bible can be used to advance apparently contradictory positions on just about anything, absent a clear set of hermeneutic or exegetical principles.

Caution should be taken so as not to appear to be opposing the Bible per se. Mainstream American sentiment, while varied, will generally side with arguments and groups which are viewed as pro-biblical. It is one thing to be considered a religious outsider; it is quite another to be labeled as "anti-religion." Since most Americans generally affirm the right of religious expression, NOW is in danger of presenting itself as potentially
anti-American, a view, which if secured, leaves little room for rational remedy. The focus must remain on final authority, that is the Bible, itself.

Working within the context of biblical authority, NOW would stand to benefit through an explicit identification with those scriptural verses which emphasize the absolute quality of male authority, both within the home and the church. Promise Keepers has deliberately aligned its rhetoric with biblical passages which place men in a more servile position in their role as husbands -- to "love their wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians, 5:25). Yet, other biblical passages clearly allude to the kind of absolute male authority to which Promise Keepers' rhetoric remains at, best, ambiguous. Two of the more compelling passages include Ephesians 5:22-24, which states:

Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church...Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything

and I Timothy 2:11-12 which commands women to "learn in quietness and full submission" and further denies women the right "to teach or have authority over a man" even to the point of being completely "silent" in the church.

While feminist rhetoric has pointed in the general direction of these verses, it must go further by identifying the specific passages themselves. More
importantly, however, feminist opposition must then move to draw out the larger implications of Promise Keepers' rhetorical management of the Bible. Promise Keepers must be shown to be selective in its use of the Bible.

Once shown, NOW could then frame its rhetoric in terms of a dilemma in which Promise Keepers would be guilty of one of two options: either they do advocate all of what the Bible has to say about gender relationships and thus are guilty of being deceptive in not making their position clear, or they do not subscribe to the Bible in its entirety, thereby problematizing their very identity as evangelical. This latter option could then be used to turn the tide of biblical authority against Promise Keepers in the minds of the very audiences on which Promise Keepers' lifeblood depends.

Summary

This chapter has examined the exigence of opposition to Promise Keepers. I divided this analysis into two general categories, roughly reflective of the worldviews from which that opposition proceeds. I first examined the way in which internal opposition to Promise Keepers has been handled. My analysis reveals that the central point of contestation is metaphorical in nature and concerns the right to define the terms and conditions governing Promise Keepers' relationship to the body of Christ. Depending upon the interest community involved, the rhetorical

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effort is made either to a) place significant constraints upon Promise Keepers' function within that body, or b) to reject the order's place within the body altogether.

A primary strategy of identification was found in the opposition's use of scriptural implants. Further analysis of this strategy revealed a tri-level scheme by which claims against Promise Keepers are given the appearance of absolute truth and its opponents granted authority to speak for God against Promise Keepers. In addition, Promise Keepers has been charged with contributing to the problem of feminization, for its psychoheresy, and for its unscriptural ecumenicalism. The latter charge is particularly prominent among fundamentalist interest communities. As discovered, these critics often frame their rhetoric in ways which suggest the underlying concern with Promise Keepers is not necessarily one of truth, but of power. Simply put, Promise Keepers is seen as a threat to the autonomy granted smaller, (i.e., less powerful) interest communities.

It was further discovered that when interest communities opposed to Promise Keepers frame their opposition in terms of power, common strategies of identification can be discerned. This is true regardless of the worldviews from which that opposition proceeds. Both internal and external opposition employed a macro-level strategy of identification in which Promise Keepers
is aligned with other large scale movements which constitute a threat to the freedoms and privileges of smaller interest communities. Both also employed a bifurcation strategy which seeks to drive a wedge between Promise Keepers' leaders and followers.

Ideologically, the primary point of dispute between Promise Keepers and its external opposition centers on the relationship between gender and authority. I have suggested that Promise Keepers' rhetoric is ambiguous on the issue of gender relations and, consequently, is subject to conflicting interpretation. NOW's rhetoric has largely been a reaction to a reading of Promise Keepers which is absolutist on the question of authority. It was contended that while such a reading is justified, alternative strategies might better serve NOW's efforts to gain a wider hearing among feminists, including those of evangelical persuasion who have a vested interest in furthering their station within the American social order.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study sought to explore the role that rhetoric has played in the evangelical-movement organization known as Promise Keepers. The central argument of this dissertation maintained that the growth and development of Promise Keepers can be accounted for through the rhetorical management of three specific exigencies: identity, recruitment, and opposition. To sustain this argument a comprehensive array of data was analyzed according to a critical framework in which Burkeian, movement, and organizational perspectives on rhetoric were brought to bear. Additionally, the work of Kenneth Burke provided a conceptual basis for understanding the nature of social order. Social order is predicated on a kind of drama, rhetorically created and nurtured, in which the attendant notions of negativity, hierarchy, guilt, and redemption play pivotal roles.

The literature on evangelicalism delineated a worldview useful for understanding the ideological character of its rhetoric. This literature suggested that evangelical rhetoric is informed by the forces of democratization and manifested in a tension between individual interest and autonomy on the one hand, and corporate, organized unity on the other. Case studies of
populist religious movements indicated that the exigencies of recruitment and opposition shape their character and function. Finally, the literature on organizational rhetoric revealed that the management of individual and corporate identity is an additional and important exigence which organized collectives must manage.

Methodologically, this study was informed by Burke's notion of identification. In this study, identification was conceived as a rhetorical strategy, involving the conscious selection of metaphors and various other linguistic devices over prevailing alternatives. In addition, a new critical term was offered linking identification to the evangelical tenet of *sola scriptura*. The justification for this term followed from the evangelical tendency to use biblical verses to inspire motive, belief, and action.

**Research Questions and Findings**

Chapter Four analyzed rhetoric's role in managing the exigence of identity. First, Promise Keepers employed identification strategies of form and content to construct a distinctive religious identity for its subscribers. A series of rank-ordered, legal-like prescriptions covering a range of contemporary social, moral, and ethical problems were framed in terms broad enough to accommodate
a range of conflicting religious interests and ideals. The hierarchical form of the prescriptions were consonant with Promise Keepers implicit identity as a religious order.

Additional strategies of identification attempted to universalize the guilt-redemption experience for men of varying social, racial, economic, and religious status. Rhetorically-induced guilt provided the transformative mechanism by which a new identity was created. This identity, constructed around the titular term *Promise Keeper,* gave its subscribers the ability to overcome excessive occupational ambition, renounce drug and alcohol addiction, and form lasting relations with family and friends. In short, this new identity granted individuals power and authority to do things other identities, including religious ones, were incapable of doing.

To further distinguish its identity from other religious ones, Promise Keepers employed the metaphor of the spiritual athlete. This metaphor gave rise to a potentially divisive motive of competition. However, the competitive aspect of this identity was managed by providing a set of scapegoats or targets against which individuals could compete. The motive of competition was further managed by giving voice to individual achievement, while emphasizing the co-operative role of the spiritual athlete in relation to a team of such athletes. In these ways, Promise Keepers successfully managed the tension.
between individual and corporate identity, thereby establishing itself as a unique and viable religious authority.

Chapter Five analyzed rhetoric's role in managing the exigence of recruitment. Some attention was given to the pre-existing network used to disseminate Promise Keepers' vision to local area constituencies. More centrally, however, initial recruitment was aided significantly by the momentum generated by Promise Keepers' co-founder Bill McCartney and his prior public persona. This persona, a joint production of McCartney's coaching successes and religious zealotry, became a rallying point for otherwise nominally interested audiences who saw in "Coach Mac's" public trials a motive for going public with their own religious values.

Seizing the opportunity afforded by this momentum, Promise Keepers held mass rallies in physical locations redounding with secular, cultural significance and reappropriated them to religious ends. Stadium events became corporate venues for standardizing religious experience, building corporate identity, and dramatizing corporate solidarity against the contemporary enemies of postmodern culture. Strategies of identification were employed to bring the emotional and communal aspects of the stadium experience to the local church in the form of the small group. These efforts were significantly aided by

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the creation of a professionalized system of recruitment by which Promise Keepers further strengthened its order and staked its claim as a legitimate religious authority.

On the exigence of recruitment, this dissertation has contributed to our understanding of religious orders in ways which sociological and anthropological accounts cannot. Sociological analyses of movements have been concerned to identify and isolate certain demographic variables which can account for patterns of variance in recruitment success. Relationships between or among these variables are then explained according to some name brand sociological theory. Thus, for instance, membership in a given movement is linked to variables such as social class, age, race, sex, religious affiliation, etc. These correlations are then explained by recourse to deprivation, disorganization, or maladjustment models.

Such analyses, while somewhat productive, are nevertheless limited in their explanatory power. For example, it is unusual for these kinds of sociological models to account for more than half of the overall variance in recruitment success. In large measure, they fail to explain adequately why some, or even many individuals within the same demographic stratum, fail to join movements where others in that same stratum do. And they do even less -- in fact they do nothing -- in
accounting for why individuals who fall outside the privileged correlations altogether seek to join a movement.

A significant response to these limitations was offered by Gerlach and Hine (1968). As indicated in Chapter Two, these authors argued that recruitment success is largely contingent upon the cultivation of pre-existing interpersonal relationships. This account, while closer to the core, is also limited.

Even if it can be safely assumed that pre-existing relationships between and among relatives, friends, business associates, fellow church members, etc. do provide a more likely basis for movement involvement, the question as to why some of these relationships lead to involvement and others do not remains unanswered. To say that Andy's involvement, or lack thereof, in the Promise Keepers is due to his pre-existing relationship with church buddy Ed simply raises the further and more penetrating question as to the nature of their relationship. Put another way, the interpersonal relationship between Andy and Ed is itself in need of an explanation which would account for the former's involvement or uninvolve in Promise Keepers.

A less reductive and certainly complimentary explanation would include an account of the rhetorical dynamics which create, nurture, and sustain such
relationships. This dissertation, with its emphasis on the process of identification, offers a competing, and in my view, more satisfying theoretical basis for explaining why and how recruitment to the Promise Keepers is achieved.

Commensurate with its phenomenal rate of growth and mounting influence, Promise Keepers incurred opposition. Chapter Six explored the ideological nature of this opposition and the role of rhetoric in managing it. Not surprisingly, most of the criticism aimed at Promise Keepers issued from sources holding an evangelical worldview. Internal opposition to the Promise Keepers employed various negative strategies of identification in an effort to mitigate or undermine the order's influence.

The manner in which Promise Keepers has been criticized by evangelicals and the degree to which Promise Keepers has been able to withstand this criticism varied according to the order's perceived location in relation to the body of Christ. Some strategies aim at locating Promise Keepers outside the body altogether. Still others attempt at restricting the order's function within that body. The rhetorical wrangle between Promise Keepers and its internal critics thus turned on the right to own the terms and conditions of this normative metaphor. With relatively little concession, Promise Keepers has been able to weather the charges of its internal opposition.
largely because its subscribers continue to express confidence in the order's place and function within the body of Christ.

External opposition to Promise Keepers also employed various negative strategies of identification. The National Organization for Women, in particular, has sought to convince audiences that Promise Keepers' ideology is oppressive to females. Though NOW's rhetoric has received considerable exposure, it has not been particularly effective in gaining mainstream acceptance. Several alternative strategies were proposed which might better serve NOW's interests, and, at the same time, force Promise Keepers to assume a larger measure of accountability for its ideology.

Finally, Chapter Six provided evidence of a scriptural implant strategy of identification. Both Promise Keepers and its opposition employ this strategy to make their respective views more or less attractive. Closer analysis of this strategy suggests that scriptural implants function on at least three related levels of identification.

Level one seeks to identify the given passage(s) in the Bible and claim(s) external to the Bible as being one and the same truth type. Level two works by bringing into a state of equivalence the content or denotative meaning of the given biblical passage(s) with the meaning of the
claim or claims external to it. Level three attempts to equate the authority behind the Bible with the source authority of claims external to the Bible. The authority in question may be expressly stated as the authority to speak for God. Interestingly, internal opposition typically did not address Promise Keepers use of the Bible according to the first two levels. They did, however, challenge the order's authority to speak for God.

This dissertation has provided evidence to sustain the argument that Promise Keepers' success can be explained by the rhetorical management of identity, recruitment, and opposition along differential tiers of its hierarchy. As a case study in evangelical rhetoric, this dissertation largely supports Cheney's (1991) argument that contemporary organizations, including religious ones, must manage multiple identities. Promise Keepers is more than just an organization, however. Thus, the additional exigencies of recruitment and opposition were considered.

Importantly, rhetoric was found to be instrumental in negotiating the conflicting interests within as well as across these exigencies. For instance, rhetorical strategies aimed at recruitment were found to be in conflict with the kind of corporate identity Promise Keepers wished to foster for itself. This conflict gave rise to rhetorical compromises which constrained the
extent to which interests within each exigency could be realized, even as a more compatible relationship obtained between them.

Future Research

Promise Keepers has recorded its meetings (or minutes) from the outset of its project. These artifacts are not part of the order's public record, but its leaders have indicated that they are available for on-site scholarly examination. These artifacts could provide substantial insight into the rhetorical machinations of the order's inner core, particularly during its incipient stages. The artifacts would allow scholars to trace the development of Promise Keepers' vision with much greater temporal precision. Finally, it would place such an examination squarely within the purview of rhetorical scholarship: Promise Keepers' vision, however divine its inspiration, developed rhetorically via the negotiation process among the order's inner core.

This dissertation provides a potentially valuable new direction for examining contemporary evangelical rhetoric largely absent in current rhetorical theory and criticism. The use of select biblical passages to sanction or censure a point of view is a readily discernible, though woefully under-examined, aspect of evangelical rhetoric. This study
provided an initial conceptual and methodological approach to explore this phenomenon from a rhetorical point of view.

Evangelicals endorse and readily profess the Bible's final authority in matters of human existence. Yet, as this dissertation suggests, there is widespread divergence within evangelicalism on how this authority is concretely applied. That is to say, there exists no universal standard within evangelicalism designating the interpretation and application of Scripture. This condition ensures, on the one hand, that the Bible will continue to provide a rich source of invention for those who would "speak for God" even while it portends as intractably elusive the prospects for a unified evangelical theology.

From this point of view, a dialectic may well emerge in which the Bible is understood to promote human subjugation on the one hand and to advance human freedom on the other. Rhetoric is the means by which this dialectic is both framed and negotiated. More broadly considered, this dissertation suggests that rhetorical scholarship may occupy a legitimate space at the intersection of theological, philosophical, and religious discussions concerning the postmodern management of biblical Scripture.
Postscript

The future status of Promise Keepers is uncertain. In 1997, Promise Keepers experienced a precipitous drop (28%) in stadium event attendance figures. As a result, Promise Keepers dismissed hundreds of employees and closed a number of state offices. Currently, Promise Keepers is in the process of reorganizing its economic and religious priorities (D. Wardell, telephone interview).

Clatterbaugh (1995) predicts that Promise Keepers will soon fade from view in the manner of its evangelical predecessors. They are fighting a battle to recover a culture economically and morally weighted against them. Society is changing its preferences and prejudices at a clip faster than Promise Keepers can negotiate them (Clatterbaugh, 1995).

For its subscribers, however, Promise Keepers is not the last hue and cry of a battle long lost, but a resounding trumpet call to a war newly discovered. It is a rhetoric of restoration, of restoring fathers to their sons, husbands to their wives, men to their communities, and ultimately, a nation to its God. In the main, Promise Keepers is evangelicalism's response to the postmodern problem of unity and diversity.

For all of this, however, the rhetoric of Promise Keepers reflects a pervasive, if unconscious, irony and paradox characteristic of the postmodern condition. This
is seen in the promise of simple solutions to complex social problems by recourse to symbolically enhanced productions and experiences. It is seen in the "fast food" approach to spirituality, and in its consumerist orientation to signs and signifiers attempting to construct "vital relationships" with others by drawing attention to themselves.

It is seen in the arbitrary reappropriation of cultural symbols of power and authority, a process in which sacred texts themselves become part of the morass of de-historicized, de-authorized fragments of meaning, full of sound and fury, signifying anything; signifying nothing. It is seen in the tendency to decry the dissolution of the public and private spheres, while weaving dramas for public consumption from the fabric of private despair.

It is seen in the ostensible confidence of leaders whom its professional marketers have called a very "insecure bunch of guys" (Dan Shaeffer, telephone interview with author, 9 January 1998). It is seen in a public rhetoric confident of a vision for the future whose purveyors privately speculate on its impending demise (D. Wardell, telephone interview).

Perhaps most paradoxically, it is seen in the construction of an identity principled upon the notion of ongoing commitment whose rhetorical means spectacularize,
and thereby render most meaningful, the experience of the dramatically-situated moment. It is a paradox of commitment whose habits are informed by rhetorical fixes and transformative life-experiences, heroically-styled and endlessly recycled. Rhetorically considered, the fate of the Promise Keepers lies not so readily in the "power of a promise kept" as it rests in the power of a rhetoric purchased.
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What is a Promise Keeper? [Cassette Recording]. Denver: Promise Keepers.


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VITA

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